



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **The economics of Akie identity: adaptation and change among a hunter-gatherer people in Tanzania**

Schöpperle, F.

### **Citation**

Schöpperle, F. (2011). *The economics of Akie identity: adaptation and change among a hunter-gatherer people in Tanzania*. s.l.: s.n. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18564>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18564>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# **The Economics of Akie Identity: Adaptation and Change among a Hunter-Gatherer People in Tanzania**



**Florian Schöpperle**

**MA Thesis for the Research Masters' Degree in African Studies  
University of Leiden & African Studies Centre  
Leiden**

**Supervisors:**

**Prof. Dr Jan Abbink, Dr. Sabine Luning**

**December 2011**

# Table of Contents

<b>List of Abbreviation/Maps</b>	<b>p. 4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>p. 5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>p. 6</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Field</b>	<b>p. 11</b>
1.1 The Thematic Field	p. 11
1.1.1 The indigeneity debate	p. 12
1.1.2 Indigeneity and economics	p. 14
1.2 The Actual Field	p. 17
1.1.1 Personal Motivation	p. 18
1.1.2 Methods	p. 19
1.1.3 Kiteto: Some General Information	p. 22
1.1.4 The Natural Environment of Kiteto	p. 22
1.1.5 The Diverse Population of the District	p. 23
<b>Chapter 2: Kiteto's Foragers</b>	<b>p. 26</b>
2.1 The Problem of Ethnic Classification	p. 28
2.1.1 The Concepts of Ethnicity and Indigeneity	p. 28
2.1.2 The Akie within the Debate of Ethnicity and Indigeneity	p. 30
2.2 Akie Ethnic Identity and Current Living Conditions	p. 31
2.2.1 The Akiek Language	p. 35
2.2.2 Akie Perceptions of Identity	p. 37
2.2.3 The Perception of Kiteto's Traditional Hunter-Gatherers by their Neighbours	p. 40
2.3 Discrimination and Marginalization of the Akie in Kiteto	p. 44

<b>Chapter 3: Environmental Change and Resource Competition</b>	<b>p. 47</b>
3.1 Population Growth, Resource Scarcity and Conflict	p. 49
3.2 Reasons for Resource Competition in Kiteto	p. 50
3.2.1 Historical Survey of Resource Competition in Kiteto	p. 51
3.2.2 Improvement in Infrastructure, Population Growth and Immigration	p. 53
3.3 The Implementation and Execution of Tanzanian Land Law	p. 57
<b>Chapter 4: Akie Responses to a Changing Social and Natural Environment</b>	<b>p. 63</b>
4.1 Akie Strategies to Face Increasing Marginalization and Resource Competition	p. 65
4.2 Napilo Konya	p. 69
4.2.1 Case Study: Thomas Kimbey	p. 73
4.2.2 Case Study: Peter Olekano	p. 76
4.3 Ngapapa	p.78
<b>Chapter 5: External Influences Shaping the Economics of Identity</b>	<b>p. 83</b>
5.1 NGOs in Tanzania: General Overview	p. 83
5.2 INGOs and the Akie of Kiteto	p. 85
5.3 Private Donors and External Sponsors	p. 89
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>p. 93</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>p. 99</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>p. 100</b>

## **List of Abbreviations**

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
CORDS	Community Research and Development Services
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	Indigenous Nongovernmental Organizations
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
KINNAPA	Kibaya, Kimana, Njoro, Ndaleta, Namelok, and Partimbo
LAMP	Land Management Programme
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NSGRP	National Strategy Paper for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty
PINGO	Pastoralists Indigenous NGOs Forum
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
TANGO	Tanzania Association of Nongovernmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

## **List of Illustrations**

Maps:

Map: Kiteto District p. 25

Map: Research Locations in Kiteto p. 25

Photographs:

Photograph 1: Researcher during an interview in Napilo Konya p. 21

Photograph 2: Several Akie-youngsters in preparation of the *jando* p. 41

Photograph 3: A natural water-well during the dry season p. 48

## Acknowledgements

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Research Master's Degree at the African Studies Centre Leiden. A various number of people have contributed to make this study possible.

Jan Abbink from the African Studies Centre Leiden and Sabine Luning from the Anthropology Department in Leiden supervised and inspired me throughout the entire process of researching and writing. Without their patience and encouragement I would have lost the belief in my scientific abilities. Thank you very much for guiding and motivating me to finish the study.

I owe also special thanks to my local supervisor Pius Yanda from the Resource Assessment Institute in Dar es Salaam who welcomed me in Tanzania during my fieldwork in 2010, and who supported me to face local processes of administration. Without his support I could not have achieved to receive a residence or research permission. In addition I want to thank Mirijam de Bruijn from the African Study Centre Leiden who brought me in contact with Professor Yanda, and Azeb Amah who coordinated all phases of confusion and assisted me to accomplish bureaucratic challenges.

Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to all my Tanzanian friends, supporters, hosts and informants. Without their cooperation the entire research could not have been conducted. I owe specific thanks to Baba Olingidi and Thomas Kimbey in Napilo Konya who hosted me for several weeks during my field trips and who shared their food and bed with me. I cannot express what it meant to me to find so much friendliness and hospitality.

Finally I want to thank my entire family in Germany. They accommodated me for a long half year in 2011 until I finished the paper, and regularly had to deal with my frustrations and mood swings. Thank you for your patience, belief and encouragement.

## Introduction

It is widely acknowledged in social science that the individual identity of people might correlate with economic processes and therefore affect economic outcomes. George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton developed a social-scientific model that aims to detect in which ways the psychological and sociological concepts of identity might interact with distinct economic processes, and how identity might in its turn have economic effects.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the model has been only applied to some specific examples, and so an exact degree of correlation has not yet been discovered. Furthermore, only a few scientific disciplines recently engaged with Akerlof's and Kranton's theory: the application of their model is usually limited to psychology and sociology.

This thesis intends to contribute an anthropological perspective to the discussion. By focusing on a particular group of people that claims to share a common group-identity, this study intends to examine how a common identity might correlate with economic processes. I here pose the hypothesis that identity can be transformed into an economic good that is negotiated differently by various "stakeholders". To carry out such an inquiry, the thesis focuses on the Akie, a small ethnic-group that is facing very specific economic conditions. I will first introduce the case of the "Akie"<sup>2</sup>, who live in northern-central Tanzania.

The Akie are a group of traditional hunter-gatherers that live in scattered units at the southern fringes of the Tanzanian Maasai steppe. Due to their generally small number (usually estimated between 2000-5000 members<sup>3</sup>) and their traditionally foraging lifestyle, the Akie have been politically, socially and economically marginalized and face different forms of discrimination and exclusion. While in the past most Akie lived in semi-nomadic family-groups and secured their subsistence by hunting and gathering, the majority of them have

---

<sup>1</sup> Akerlof & Kranton, "Economics and Identity", p. 715-753.

<sup>2</sup> The term "Akie" derives from the Akiak language and means literally translated "people of the land". It is used to identify a distinct ethnic-group, and is basically applied by the members of the group and by several donor and aid agencies. Other local people mostly call the Akie "Il-Torobo", "Ndorobo" or just "Dorobo", which are expressions for people who do not possess livestock, and who live by hunting and gathering.

<sup>3</sup> The BBC estimate was 2000-3000 Akie, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/tribe/tribes/akie/index.shtml> (31.11.2011); The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) counted 5268 Akie: see *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2010*, p. 492 [http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0001\\_I\\_2010\\_EB.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0001_I_2010_EB.pdf) (31.11.2011). The anthropologist Marianne Bakken estimated the number of Akie at about 3000 (in *Becoming Visible*, 2004, p. 1).

meanwhile started to cultivate crops recently. The transformation of livelihood meant a major change for the Akie in several ways. Thus, entire families had to find cultivation sites and therefore settle in specific areas. This led to the establishment of different Akie villages all over the Maasai steppe (although some traditional foragers preferred to move into already existing settlements). The change of livelihood was initiated and subsidized by regional state-institutions (like local Development Offices), several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and some private donors, who (for several reasons) wanted to improve the difficult situation of the Akie and intended to better “integrate” the traditional hunter-gatherers politically and economically into mainstream Tanzanian society.

However, the plan of strengthening the Akie’s weak social status has not yet been successful. On the contrary, as the Maasai steppe experienced several basic natural and social changes within the past twenty years, the originally marginalized situation of the Akie has even worsened. Big parts of former bush and pasture land have been recently transformed into agrarian country, which led to several major changes throughout the region. While the Maasai steppe was in the past primarily inhabited by nomadic herders and semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers, it lately started to host and increasing number of farmers and agro-pastoralists (who combine the cultivation of crops and the breeding of livestock). This transformation was basically caused by the implementation of distinct development programs aiming to sedentarize the native population of the area, and a generally improving infrastructure, which attracted “foreign” farmers and investors to move to Maasailand. However, the transformation of the area and the quickly growing population has led to a rise of resource competition. Especially renewable resources, like water and land, have been increasingly contested. For the Akie this development meant an additional threat, because their already weak social status and their lack of political representation made them specifically vulnerable to all forms of competition. Hence, many of them have lost cultivation land to immigrating farmers and/or sedentarizing pastoralists, who just settled down and took over Akie properties, or who simply occupied the scarce natural water wells and blocked them. Reacting to this threat the Akie developed distinct modes of adaptation. While some of them gradually assimilated to neighbouring societies and took on different identities, others started to seek the help of the state- and nongovernmental institutions. By highlighting their difficult situation and distinct cultural status they pleaded for specific treatment to guarantee their future livelihood. In the year 2000 the Akie became recognized by the United Nations as an “indigenous” ethnic-group. Thus, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), which is directly

linked to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), put them on its list of indigenous peoples.<sup>4</sup>

By cooperating with distinct state-governments and some local NGOs the IWGIA intends to improve the situation of indigenous peoples generally and to advocate their interests. For the Akie the recognition by the UN opened up new possibilities. While their indigenous ethnic-status usually disadvantaged them in the past (because it marginalized them), it has now become a beneficial tool for some of them. Thus, an increasing number of Akie has been successful to claim specific rights because of their distinct ethnic-status.

This thesis highlights the “material” manifestations of ethnic identity by the Akie and other stakeholders (like NGOs, state institutions and their neighbours) and investigates how people are using it to influence economic processes. By analyzing the Akie’s distinct modes of adaptation to a quickly changing environment the thesis exemplifies how people that share a common basic identity are utilizing their specific ethnic status to react and profit from emerging transformations in their immediate surroundings. In the thesis I want to prove that ethnic identity might be more than a just human attribute and can also be used as an economic tool. To detect the correlation of ethnic identity and economic process, I focus specifically on the anthropological conceptions of ethnicity and indigeneity. By elaborating on how these concepts are applied in the case of the Akie, the thesis is framed in current scientific debates on these concepts.

While the discussion about the status and rights of indigenous peoples has been a frequently addressed topic in social anthropology, an investigation about possible correlations between ethnic identities and economic processes is a rather innovative approach. In this thesis I pose the following central question:

How are the Akie negotiating their distinct ethnic identity to influence economic processes, and how are they reacting and adapting to changes within their immediate environment?

---

<sup>4</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2000/2001*, p. 251-260  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/IW\\_2001.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/IW_2001.pdf) (26.06.2011)

## Outline

In order to answer the research question the thesis is subdivided into five different chapters. The first chapter engages with my specific field of research and tries to frame the case of the Akie theoretically and practically. By introducing into the debates on ethnic identity and indigeneity the chapter highlights how complex ethnic identity is interwoven with political and economic processes, and what the extent of my thematic field actually is. Although different stakeholders might have utilized ethnic identity already in the past to influence economic processes, the degree and size of such correlations certainly increased with the advent of indigenous-policies during the '90s. The chapter demonstrates that the implementation of a specific indigenous-program by the UN in 1995 fundamentally influenced the economics of identity worldwide, and therefore also stretched my thematic field. Furthermore the section detects the actuality of my topic. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the region where I conducted research. As the Akie are a scattered group, spread out all over the Maasai steppe, I focused on one administrative area to carry out the fieldwork: Kiteto District. This was chosen because the area hosts a remarkable number of traditional hunter-gatherers, and because the region and its people have been only scantily described scientifically. By presenting some essential characteristics of my actual field sites I provide the basis for the following chapters.

The second chapter introduces the Akie of Kiteto. By highlighting the variety of people's distinct livelihoods, the chapter primarily discusses the complexity of a shared group identity. It discusses the possible reasons for which it might be possible to identify the Akie as an indigenous ethnic group, and why it is generally difficult to classify people into ethnic categories. My goal is to emphasize that people who seem to share the same ethnic identity still might adapt differently to environmental changes, and that the immediate surroundings of people determine how people are *negotiating* their ethnic identity. In additionally describing for which reasons and in what ways the Akie are marginalized by "others", I explain also how and why individuals are "materializing" their common identity to influence economic processes. Hence, the chapter discusses two different things: 1) it questions the existence of indigenous-ethnic identity, 2) it also highlights that such an identity is applied, materialized and utilized by people.

The third and fourth chapter focus on recent changes in the natural and social environment of Kiteto which had a big impact on life in the region and forced people to adapt. While the third chapter engages basically with the rise of resource competition which led to

an increasing marginalization of the Akie and therefore forced them to develop new modes of adaptation, the fourth chapter exemplifies distinct cases. By demonstrating how people have been dealing with environmental changes, both chapters analyze in which ways economic processes might correlate with people's identities. As these sections are going to show, people developed various strategies for how and when to materialize and utilize their common identity.

The fifth and last chapter finally discusses how NGOs and other private donors might be involved in the economics of identity. By presenting how these parties interact with the Akie, the chapter analyzes in which ways common identities and economic processes are being influenced by external factors.

# Chapter 1:

## The “Field”

Defining a particular “field of research” is a tricky task in modern social anthropology. As distinct geographic spaces have been always politically, culturally, economically and/or naturally interconnected, clear borders cannot be defined, and so even a topographic identification of ‘the field’ appears to be difficult. Furthermore, it has to be considered that most anthropologists during their research focus purposefully on particular living environments of people that are not necessarily bound to one specific geographic space. As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argued: “...people have undoubtedly always been more mobile and identities less fixed than the static and typologizing approaches of classical anthropology would suggest.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, a purely territorial description of a distinct place frequently depicts “the field” of research only insufficiently.

I use the term “field” in this paper mainly in a geographic sense, which means that I am basically relating on one particular region. This is mainly due to the fact that my research-permission was limited to one specific administrative area of Tanzania (namely Kiteto District), which didn’t allow me to visit other places. However, as Kiteto is naturally, economically and politically part of a much larger natural and social environment, it is *de facto* only a glimpse of my real field.

This chapter is subdivided into two big sections. In the first part I introduce my “thematic field” to highlight the scope and complexity of my topic, while the second part depicts and classifies my “practical field of research”, i.e. the locations where I gathered most of my data.

### 1.1 The Thematic Field

Engaging with the anthropological concept of ethnic identity and investigating in which ways it might correlate with economic processes means to work within a global field of study. As most economic processes and perceptions of ethnic identity are affected by distinct

---

<sup>5</sup> Gupta & Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference”, p. 9.

developments and policies, which again are part of much bigger networks, it is difficult to frame and determine them locally.

This thesis basically aims to investigate how the ethnic identity of a people, who are now attributed by the United Nations to be an “indigenous people”, correlates with economic processes. Thus, it deals with the concept of indigeneity and tries to discover how it is applied and utilized by different stakeholders. My goal is to visualize that people and institutions understand and use the conception differently and that a materialization of indigenous-ethnic identity correlates with economic processes. Therefore I take from Tania Li’s theory that people are positioning themselves differently within their distinct social and natural environment, and that various factors influence how and why they do this. As she argues:

“[A group’s]... self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither simply invented, adopted or imposed. It is rather a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practises, landscapes and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous, realigning in ways they connect to the nation the government and their own, unique tribal place are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of articulation.”<sup>6</sup>

To provide a basis for my analysis I briefly introduce the indigeneity debate, before I elaborate how this concept of indigeneity is connected to economic processes.

### *1.1.1 The Indigeneity Debate*

The indigeneity debate is a social scientific discussion that focuses on the identification and classification of indigenous peoples – by others and by themselves. It emanates from the assumption that every region possesses an “indigenous” (or native) population, which possesses a distinct ethnic identity that can be scientifically identified.<sup>7</sup> The concept of indigeneity has been strongly discussed in public and science and received support as well as criticism.

The original motivation for the development of an indigenous concept was to strengthen the weak social status of indigenous (or native) peoples in North America and Australia. Thus, advocates of the concept, like former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, were arguing that the native populations of both continents had been marginalized within their homelands for centuries, and that these people would need specific

---

<sup>6</sup> Li, “Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot”, p. 151

<sup>7</sup> B  teille, “The Idea of Indigenous Peoples”, p. 190.

treatment to become successfully integrated into national society.<sup>8</sup> As a result, some states (like Canada, USA and Australia) established specific programs to identify and support the indigenous populations of their countries. Distinct indigenous policies have been implemented, and in some cases even entire areas were demarcated and committed to the administration of and by native peoples. While the concept of indigeneity was originally primarily applied to the native populations of North America and Australia, it recently received global accreditation and therefore has been also transposed to other continents. Thus, the United Nations proclaimed the decade of indigenous peoples in 1995 and launched a specific forum (the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) to support indigenous peoples worldwide. The forum started to identify and classify native peoples all over the planet and implemented programs to strengthen their cases.<sup>9</sup>

However, the conception of indigeneity is highly debated in social sciences. Especially anthropologists are often engaging critically with the topic and question its eligibility. Detractors like Adam Kuper argue that it is scientifically impossible to define indigenous categories and that such a determination would be misleading and wrong. He stated that a classification of indigenous peoples neglects the fact that most societies have always been mobile and that the majority of peoples used to interact and exchange with neighbouring societies. According to him "...local ways of life and group identities have been subjected to a variety of pressures and have seldom, if ever, remained stable over the long term."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Kuper accuses the advocates of the indigenous concept to maintain a primordial perception of identity, which emanates from the assumption that some people are the carrier of a specific ancient culture, while others are not. Thus he blames the supporters of indigeneity to apply the concept too simplistically. According to him the term "indigenous" is almost exclusively used for groups that are said to possess a traditionally "primitive" (or primordial) lifestyle (like hunter-gatherers or pastoralists), but not for other societies (like farming people) who might possess the same qualification to claim such a status, but who are just not "primitive" enough.<sup>11</sup>

Most social anthropologists are actually subscribing to Kuper's argument. They agree that an identification and classification of indigenous peoples is difficult, because inter-ethnic contacts have blurred the borders of ethnic identity and therefore impede a stable categorization. However, a quite remarkable number of anthropologists still identifies with the

---

<sup>8</sup> Boutros-Ghali, "Foreword", in: *Voice of Indigenous Peoples*.

<sup>9</sup> Kuper, "Return of the Native", p. 389.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 390.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 389-390.

cause of indigenous peoples. Although many agree that the debate is philosophically problematic, some of them state that the cases need to be highlighted, because many so-called “indigenous peoples” are currently facing extreme forms of exclusion and marginalization. Thus, Alan Barnard argues:

“I agree with Kuper that an essentialist notion of ‘indigenous peoples’ is philosophically problematic, but I disagree on the implication of this for the political strategies of those seeking to regain the land of their ancestors or to link their causes with the causes of others, on different continents, in similar positions.”<sup>12</sup>

I appreciate Barnard’s sensitive statement, because I agree that people’s pursuit of improving their frequently difficult situation should not be judged automatically. Although the “weapons” of a fight might be debatable or wrong, the essential reasons that cause a struggle should not be forgotten.

### *1.1.2 Indigeneity and Economics*

Independently of where to position oneself within the debate of indigeneity one fact cannot be denied. The rise of distinct international movements that highlight the conception has put the topic into global focus, and radically influenced economic processes worldwide. Hence, the establishment of programs that support and subsidize people who are internationally recognized to possess an indigenous identity, strongly affect the flow and distribution of aid-subsidiaries. On the other hand, the distribution of subsidies also might re-influence people’s distinct actions, and therefore also might affect their individual and shared identities. This correlation of indigenous-ethnic identity and economics will be discussed in this thesis.

The most prominent organization that puts the matter of indigeneity on a global agenda is the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). The forum was launched in 1994 and was accompanied by the implementation of UN’s first decade for indigenous peoples (from 1995-2004). According to its mandate the forum focuses on the discussion of indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education health and human rights.<sup>13</sup> Although it has not yet determined a legally binding definition of “indigenous peoples”, the forum usually relates on the

---

<sup>12</sup> Barnard, “Kalahari Revisionism, Vienna and the ‘Indigenous Peoples’ Debate”, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> UNPFII (United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues), About Us/Mandate, [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/about\\_us.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/about_us.html) (10.11.2011).

designation of Juan Martinez Cobo, who worked as a Special Rapporteur to the Subcommission on Prevention and Discrimination of Minorities, and who stated:

“Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories and consider themselves distinct from other sector of society now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form a present non-dominant sector of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition to UNPFII also other organizations that promote indigenous matters have been established. Many of them are older than UNPFII, but did not receive the same attention in the past. However, only the rise of UNPFII and its proclamation of the indigenous decade led to a better international awareness of the topic. Furthermore, the establishment of the forum caused an improving interconnection among distinct institutions dealing with indigeneity. Already existing organizations, like the International Workgroup for Indigenous Issues (IWGIA) or the International Labour Organization (ILO), suddenly received more public attention and started to connect and exchange with each other. The rising publicity on indigeneity attracted potential sponsors, who increasingly began to support indigenous programs, which again allured other organizations to engage with the topic. Thus the establishment of UNPFII formed something like an umbrella-network that actually incorporated many minor organizations also engaging with indigenous issues. In addition, this development led to the founding of many smaller, frequently local NGOs that receive funding from bigger organizations working in the sector, or from external sponsors.

Specifically in Latin America and Africa there has been a visible trend of establishing organizations which focus on indigenous issues. As the aid-sector in Africa is already big, some institutions just implemented additional “indigenous programs” to receive extra funding. In addition, many new NGOs that centred their entire policies around indigeneity have recently been founded.

While some of the organizations lately launched are actually administered by non-Africans, the majority is headed by Africans who have a personal interest in being recognized as indigenous. Thus, many people working within so-called INGOs (Indigenous Nongovernmental Organizations) are members of traditionally marginalized societies that originally had a pastoral or foraging way of life. As Dorothy Hodgson found out:

---

<sup>14</sup> Cobo, “The Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations”, vol. 5, par. 379. At: [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/MCS\\_v\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/MCS_v_en.pdf) (10.11.2011).

“The term [indigenous] has been used in Africa and Asia by distinct cultural minorities who have been historically repressed by majority populations in control of the state apparatus. Although few claim to be “first people” as such, these groups argue that they share a similar structural position vis-à-vis their nation-states in the Americas and Australia: the maintenance of cultural distinctiveness; a long experience of subjugation, marginalization, and dispossession by colonial and post-colonial powers; and for some, a historical priority in terms of the occupation of their territories.”<sup>15</sup>

The number of African societies that claim to possess a distinct indigenous status and that received international accreditation by the UN has increased rapidly during the past twenty years. Thus, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), which is well connected to the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, in a 2006 report, identified 59 different groups of indigenous peoples, distributed in 26 African countries.<sup>16</sup>

Although most people that belong to one of these indigenous ethnic-groups are supported and subsidized by national and/or international donor-organizations, their current living conditions differ from region to region and/or country to country. While some peoples, like the San from Botswana, for example successfully claimed specific land rights and were in fact recognized by their government as an indigenous ethnic group, other societies are still struggling for national accreditation. Several African and Asian states (like Tanzania) have not yet signed UNPFII’s charter of securing the rights of indigenous peoples, and therefore do not legally acknowledge indigenous peoples as such. However, the fact that many societies are considered internationally as indigenous means that they are actually supported externally (by NGOs or other donor-organizations that again are funded by bigger organizations). Hence, it has become financially profitable for some groups to claim an indigenous ethnic-status. For instance, according to a public announcement on the website of the World Bank, the bank between 2003 and 2006 sponsored 79 different development programs worldwide that engaged with indigenous peoples and awarded these programs with a donation of about 1.25 million US\$.<sup>17</sup>

The possibility to utilize indigenous-ethnic identity in order to receive specific international treatment has been used by distinct societies differently. While some peoples

---

<sup>15</sup> Hodgson, “Introduction: Comparative Perspectives on the Indigenous Rights Movement in Africa and the Americas”, p. 1042.

<sup>16</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), *Indigenous Peoples in Africa: The Forgotten Peoples?*, 2006, p. 15-16.  
<http://www.achpr.org/english/Special%20Mechanisms/Indegenous/ACHPR%20WGIP%20Report%20Summary%20version%20ENG.pdf> (14.11.2011).

<sup>17</sup> World Bank, Social Development: Indigenous Peoples,  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTINDPEOPLE/0,,contentMDK:20433115~menuPK:906535~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:407802,00.html> (14.11.2011).

used their status to claim specific rights (like for example land rights), others gained an improvement of their political or socioeconomic position. However, people are usually appealing their distinct ethnic identity in a manner that meets their particular understanding of economy and identity. That means that different ethnic-groups are utilizing their distinct ethnic identity differently in order to influence economic processes (always according to their specific perception on identity and economy). Thus the correlation between economic outcomes and ethnic identity differs from society to society. Tania Li calls the strategic materialization and utilization of ethnic identity “positioning”. She states that the constant play of history, culture and power shape a specific environment, in which people do this positioning. However, according to her view it is even possible that people, who belong to the same ethnic-group but who live within various social and natural environments, might position differently because the circumstances of adaptation are not the same.<sup>18</sup>

This thesis picks up Tania Li’s theory and applies it to the specific case of the Akie, by highlighting in what variety of ways the Akie are positioning themselves within a distinct social and natural environment. Therefore, the thesis discusses the complexity of the Akie’s social and natural environment, visualizes their distinct modes of adaptation, and investigates how differently ethnic identity might correlate with economic processes.

## *1.2 The Actual Field*

In order to exemplify the distinct case of the Akie and to investigate how the shared identity of people might correlate with economic processes, I carried out six months of anthropological field-research in northern-central Tanzania. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the Akie developed different modes of adaptation to cope with distinct forms of environmental change. Thus, they are a good example to observe and describe the economics of identity from an anthropological perspective.

However, as it has been stated previously, my practical field covers only a small glimpse of the whole picture, because it is limited to distinct processes in one specific area that is part of a much bigger thematic and environmental field. Furthermore, it has to be considered that the Akie are not just bound to Kiteto but are also associated to other habitats. Hence, I am only able to speak for a small number of people who live in a very specific social and natural environment, which might differ from the habitat of other Akie groups. This sub-chapter introduces into my ‘practical’ field, i.e., the actual field locations. It explains why I

---

<sup>18</sup> Li, “Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot”, p. 153.

chose to travel to Kiteto and debates how I conducted fieldwork methodologically. In addition, it introduces the area where I worked and therefore provides the basis for the following chapters.

### *1.2.1 Personal Motivation*

From the very beginning of my studies at the African Studies Centre in Leiden I knew that I wanted to carry out fieldwork among an ‘indigenous ethnic group’ in East Africa, and to engage with a particular minority-group that had successfully maintained a distinct cultural tradition until recent times. However, the major reason why I finally selected the Akie of Tanzania and not any other ethnic-group was rather practical. As I already had acquired some Kiswahili in my undergraduate studies I wanted to combine my first anthropological fieldwork with the improvement of my language skills. I scanned different ethnic-groups in East Africa that claimed to possess an indigenous status before I chose to engage with the Akie.

I first bumped into the group in Autumn 2009, when I read an article about the Akie for one of my fieldwork seminars. From the anthropological literature I learned that the Akie were a group of traditional hunter-gatherers that lived at the southern fringes of the Tanzanian Maasai steppe and who claimed to be indigenous. However, apart from a few ethnographic descriptions that dated from colonial times and some recent papers from the late 90s and early 2000s, I could not find much additional information. Only some current reports of IWGIA and a small number of other NGOs had additionally published about them. The general lack of scientific descriptions encouraged me to focus on the Akie. By reading several annual reports of IWGIA that introduced the Akie as an indigenous ethnic group, and by looking at Marianne Bakken’s ethnographic dissertation *Becoming Visible*, I got an idea where to find them geographically.<sup>19</sup> As both sources mentioned that the Tanzanian District of Kiteto hosted a significant number of Akie, and because especially Bakken’s ethnography makes some precise assertions where to find them within the District, I chose to focus on Kiteto.

Before I travelled to Kiteto District and met the Akie for the first time, I had an entirely different, perhaps somewhat romanticized, picture about my research in mind. I expected to meet various groups of semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers who would follow the tracks of game animals, and who’d live spread all over the savannas (as I had read in the literature). Instead, I met several sedentary agglomerations of distinctive people, who

---

<sup>19</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2009*, p. 496; Bakken, *Becoming Visible*, p. 51.

frequently did not seem to belong together, because some of them lived as impoverished cultivators at the fringes of villages, while others possessed significant numbers of livestock and/or cultivation land. The variety of individuals that had adapted differently to a quickly changing environment, but who claimed anyway to possess a common identity, brought me to the idea to engage with the complexity of ethnic identity and to investigate how differently it is negotiated. Hence, I decided in cooperation with my supervisors to further examine the economics of identity for the specific case of the Akie in Kiteto.

### *1.2.2 Methods*

I gathered most of the data for this thesis in Kiteto District, Tanzania. I spent six months (from August 2010 until January 2011) in East Africa. Due to difficulties with my research- and residence permit, I spend the first two-and-a-half months in distinct offices in Dar es Salaam and Arusha, before I got all the permits to travel to Kiteto. During this time I stayed in close contact with Professor Pius Yanda from the Resource Assessment Institute in Dar es Salaam, who was my first contact person in the field and who supported me to receive my permissions. Apart from visiting offices and disturbing different officials I also spent lots of time in libraries (basically at the UN and the University of Dar es Salaam) to gather further information about the Akie and to improve my language skills. At the beginning of October 2010 I finally received the permission to conduct research in Kiteto. I arrived in the District on 14 October and stayed there until 22 December. As my research assistant (a young sociology-student from the University of Kampala whom I recruited in Arusha, where he spent his semester holidays) declined to join me on short term, I travelled to Kiteto by myself. However, against my original apprehensions most of my informants were bilingual and spoke Kiswahili as well as the regional trading language Maa. Hence I usually did not need an interpreter and therefore was able to communicate with people face-to-face.

Although I did not have a contact person in Kiteto it was not difficult to socialize with locals. By visiting the daily market of Kibaya (the capital of the District), and by talking to several officials from the regional District administration, I easily came in contact with different local people. When I explained District Development Officer Joseph Maleba about my wish to visit the Akie of the District, he immediately offered me a driver and a car to bring me to the villages. Thus, I left Kibaya after only four days and travelled to the village of Napilo Konya, which hosts the biggest number of self-declared Akie in Kiteto. The arrival in the village was one of the most exciting experiences of my entire fieldwork. After a few

minutes I was surrounded by villagers, who asked me all kind of questions. When I told them that I am a student and that I intend to stay in their village for a few days to conduct research I got lots of invitations to stay. Finally we agreed that I should stay with the family of Baba Olingidi, who warmly welcomed me in his house, and who became a very close friend. I paid and thanked my driver and sent him back to Kibaya, while I stayed in the village. From this time onwards Baba Olingidi's small house became my base camp. Thus, I planned all further travels to other locations and Akie-settlements from there, and was frequently (but not always) accompanied by Baba Olingidi's brother-in-law Thomas Kimbey, who lived next to our compound, and who seemed to know people from all over the District. From the end of October until the end of December I shuttled between Napilo Konya, Kibaya and other Akie-villages (like Ngapapa), where I usually stayed for several days or weeks, and where I interviewed the majority of my informants (who consisted of several regional politicians, some employees of local NGOs and of course locals themselves).

As indicated before, most of my data was gathered in a qualitative manner, which means through informal conversations, interviews and personal observations. Especially during my times in the rural areas of Kiteto, when I stayed in the homes of people and interacted with villagers on a daily basis, I received lots of information. The method of visiting distinct places and people, and to relate one's data to personal experiences, is usually called in social anthropology "participant observation". The term basically means that "...the researcher is playing an established participant role in the scene studied."<sup>20</sup> According to Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson participant observation is an essential component of anthropological research, and even characterizes the discipline. As they state:

"The first imperative follows from the way the idea of "the field" functions in the micropolitical academic practises through which anthropological work is distinguished from work in related disciplines such as history, sociology, political science, literature and literary criticism, religious studies, and (especially) cultural studies. The difference between anthropology and these other disciplines, it would be widely agreed, lies less in the topics studied (which, after all, overlap substantially) than in the distinctive method anthropologists employ, namely fieldwork based on participant observation."<sup>21</sup>

However, the method also possesses its weaknesses. Thus, it is very subjective and welds together the data and the researcher. Many conclusions and issues I am going to present in this paper result from personal interpretations that were influenced by conscious and unconscious factors and therefore are to be contested. Furthermore, the fact that I became an active part of

---

<sup>20</sup> Atkinson & Hammersley, "Ethnography and Participant Observation", p. 248.

<sup>21</sup> Gupta & Ferguson, *Anthropological Locations*, p. 2.

my field changed its former condition, and probably affected distinctive, ongoing processes. Hence, my appearance certainly influenced how people are usually planning their day and how they talk about things.



Picture 1: Researcher during an interview in Napilo Konya

In addition to participant observation I conducted several so-called “semi-structured, open interviews” that have been partly recorded. According to Barbara DiCicco-Bloom and Benjamin Crabtree, such interviews are “...generally organized around the set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s.”<sup>22</sup> I employed this research method usually when I was talking to regional politicians or members of distinct local NGOs, who were frequently pressed for time, and therefore wanted me to be prepared before they answered my questions. However, as this form of data generation is also a qualitative method, its weaknesses are similar to those of participant observation. Thus, I prepared some of my topics and questions originally from assumptions and interpretations gained via the latter method. Furthermore, most of my informants seemed to possess a clear idea what to tell me, and how answer my questions. While especially some politicians had a strong interest in presenting themselves as

---

<sup>22</sup> DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, “The Qualitative Research Interview”, p. 315.

distinguished leaders, employees of NGOs usually praised the developmental successes of their institutions and advertised them.

### *1.2.3 Kiteto: Some General Information*

Most of the field research for this study was conducted in Kiteto District. The District lies in the central north of Tanzania and belongs to the Region of Manyara. It covers an area of 16645 sq. km<sup>23</sup> and therefore is one of the bigger districts in Tanzania. Before Manyara Region was founded in 2002, Kiteto belonged politically to the Region of Arusha. It is currently surrounded by six other districts (Simanjiro in the North, Kilindi and Kilosa in the East, Kongwa and Dodoma Rural in the South and Kondoa in the West). The capital of Kiteto is Kibaya Town, which lies in the central western part of the District at the road from Kondoa to Tanga. The Germans founded the town in the early twentieth century as an administrative and military base. Its name derives from the Maa-language and means literally translated “we finally arrived”<sup>24</sup>. With about 50 000 inhabitants (according to an estimation of the local Land Office<sup>25</sup>) the town is the biggest settlement within the Kiteto. Other important towns are Matui in the south at the road to Dodoma, Njoro in the west at the road to Kondoa, and Kijungu in the east at the road to Tanga. The District is subdivided into 15 administrative Wards that are heading 58 accredited villages of Kiteto.

### *1.2.4 The Natural Environment of Kiteto*

Most parts of Kiteto belong to the so-called Maasai steppe, the name of a high plateau in eastern Tanzania that has an average elevation of about a 1000 meters. Some mountain peaks even reach up to 2000 meters.<sup>26</sup> The name of the area derives from the pastoral Maasai, who have mainly inhabited the region until today. Its dry savanna bush land and its lack of rivers and lakes characterize the Maasai steppe. The climate is very hot and arid, and usually only the rainy season (from late November to early April) provides some rainfall. Because the amount of rainfall is generally limited (between 500 mm in the Northeast and 600-700 mm in

---

<sup>23</sup> Tanzania Private Sector Foundation: <http://www.tpsftz.org/mapinfo.php?region=21#> (14.06.2011).

<sup>24</sup> According to my informants a group of Maasai-pastoralist that was once desperately looking for water, found a natural water-well in the area and gave the region its name. The Germans, who established the first stabile settlement at this place, took the name over and called the town “Kibaya”.

<sup>25</sup> Interview: Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

<sup>26</sup> The Free Dictionary: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Masai+Steppe> (14.06.2011).

the Southwest in annual average<sup>27</sup>), water is a scarce resource. Due to the lack of rivers and little rainfall the population of Kiteto is basically dependent on ground water. In some areas the ground water level is relatively high (especially close to mountains which usually experience a bit more annual rainfall), whereas in other regions water lies very deep. While savanna and so-called Miombo Woodland still mainly cover the Northeast of the District<sup>28</sup>, the Southwest has been increasingly transformed into cultivation land. This is explained by its better natural conditions, like the comparatively more fertile soils and more regular rainfall. Furthermore, the south of the Kiteto is generally much better connected to national infrastructure, so that it is easier to approach this region. Its wide-open plains crossed by volcanic mountain ranges in general characterize the land.

#### *1.2.5 The diverse population of the district*

According to the national population census, in 2002 Kiteto hosted 157,757 people.<sup>29</sup> As the regional Land Office estimates an annual population growth of about 4% this number has probably much increased recently. Many people concentrate in the “urban” centers of Kibaya, Matui, Njoro and Kijungu, which now host about half of the District’s population. But because the population increases very fast, lots of recently founded villages and hamlets have not yet been included in the regional statistics. Hence the exact number of people and settlements throughout the District remains unclear.<sup>30</sup>

The population of the district is diverse, and people with different cultural and historical backgrounds live close to each other. Due to its history and its specific natural environment the District hosts pastoralists, cultivators, agro-pastoralists as well as foragers. The anthropologist Sam Maghimbi assumes that about 60% of Kiteto’s present population are pure nomadic pastoralists.<sup>31</sup> Pure pastoralists are people “...who practice no agriculture and raise livestock for food consumption and internal social exchange, and are relatively free from external trading or market situations”.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Maghimbi, “Water, Nomadism and the Subsistence Ethic in Maasailand (Kiteto District)”, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> *Miombo Woodland* is closed deciduous, non-spinescent woodland that is usually found in geologically old regions with nutrient-poor soils and little rainfall. (See: Campbell, *The Miombo in Transition: Woodlands and Welfare in Africa*, p. 2).

<sup>29</sup> United Republic of Tanzania: 2002 Population and Housing Census. See [www.tanzania.go.tz/2002census.PDF](http://www.tanzania.go.tz/2002census.PDF) (14.06.2011).

<sup>30</sup> Interview: Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

<sup>31</sup> Maghimbi, “Water, Nomadism and the Subsistence Ethic in Maasailand (Kiteto District)”, p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> Jacobs, “African Pastoralists: Some General Remarks”, p. 146.

Most herders that live in Kiteto relate themselves to the so-called “Parakuyu Maasai”, who probably arrived in the region at the end of the big Maasai-expansion in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Maasai-expansion was a movement of different Maa-speaking groups from the Northern Rift Valley to the southern plains of northern-central Tanzania. Due to a lack of historical sources its exact starting date and precise chronology remain unclear. But its impact on the northern regions of the country is undeniable. It is assumed that particular Maasai groups (like e.g. the Parakuyu) were the first people to establish pure pastoral livelihoods in the northern-central plains of the state. Amongst others, the natural environment of the region caused this, as it was disadvantageous for crop cultivation (because of its dryness and little rainfall) but suitable to the expansion of herding (due to its wide open grass plains and bush land). According to John Galaty the arrival of nomadic pastoral Maa-speakers in the southern Maasai steppe led to a suppression, replacement and assimilation of many indigenous groups. Consequently the majority of people that lived in the region adopted a nomadic pastoral lifestyle. Only few Bantu-speaking groups, like some Nguu farmers and several Kalenjin-speaking foragers, resisted the advance of pastoralism and continued following their traditional lifestyle.<sup>33</sup>

But Maghimbi also states that today about 40% of Kiteto’s current inhabitants secure their subsistence by cultivating crops (basically maize) or in a mixed agro-pastoral manner.<sup>34</sup> Considering that until about thirty years ago almost everybody living in the District was herding goats and cattle or hunting and gathering; this is a high percentage. According to Joseph Maleba (the current head of the District Development Office in Kibaya) the remarkable change in food production systems and the increase of maize cultivation and mixed agro-pastoral subsistence within the last few years could be explained by three main reasons: 1) particular national and regional policies that promoted a farming lifestyle and supported former pastoralists and foragers to change 2) a general improvement in infrastructure and the invention of modern water pump systems, which enabled people to transport water into rather hostile natural environments, and therefore helped them to secure a sedentary livelihood and 3) the increasing immigration of traditionally cultivating peoples, like Rangi, Hehe or Chagga, who were attracted by Kiteto’s fertile soils and its ‘pristine land’.<sup>35</sup>

Whereas Kiteto’s agro-pastoralists live basically in villages or close to bigger stable settlements, the north-eastern savannas are mainly inhabited by pure pastoralists and semi-

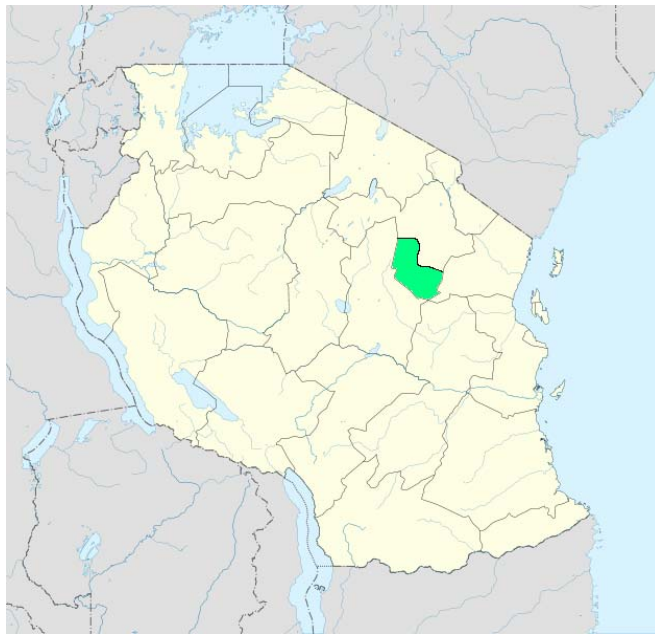
---

<sup>33</sup> Galaty, “Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism”, p. 61-87.

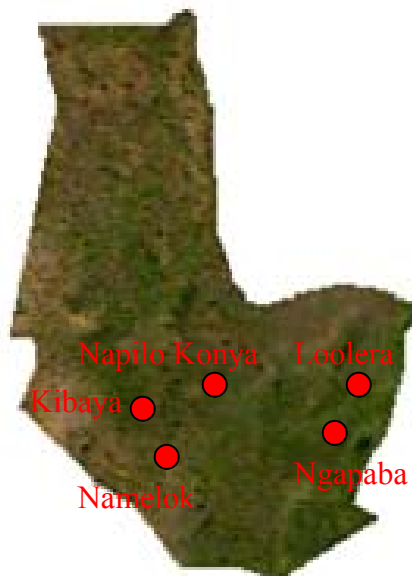
<sup>34</sup> Maghimbi, “Water, Nomadism and the Subsistence Ethic in Maasailand (Kiteto District)”, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> Interview: District Development Officer Joseph Maleba, Kibaya, 04.11.2010.

nomadic foragers. Due to higher rainfall probability in the southwest, the majority of cultivators agglomerate there, but within the last few decades also other areas that were traditionally pastures or wild bush land have been ‘discovered’ by farmers. This frequently led to disputes about land between nomadic or semi-nomadic people and sedentary cultivators or agro-pastoralists. Whereas pure pastoralists and hunter-gatherers depend on wide open bush land, which provides pastures, honey trees and game, sedentary people rely on cultivated space and therefore clear the savanna and demarcate particular areas.



Map 1: The District of Kiteto in Tanzania  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babati> (29.11.2011 Kiteto arranged)



Map 2: The District of Kiteto: Towns and Villages  
<http://www.maplibrary.org/stacks/Africa/Tanzania/Manyara/Kiteto/index.php>  
(29.11.2011 Settlements arranged)

## Chapter 2

### Kiteto's Foragers

In order to understand how people utilize their distinct ethnic identity to influence economic processes it is necessary to first discover the shared factors of a common identity, and to highlight in which economic situation people are. Hence, this chapter introduces the Akie of Kiteto and discusses on the basis of which factors it was possible to identify them as a distinct ethnic entity. The chapter also suggests how regional economic processes, like the negotiation of the bride price, correlate with changes in people's social and natural environment, and how these transformations might in their turn affect people's identities. I therefore first provide a general overview of the traditionally foraging societies of Kiteto before I introduce to the concepts of ethnicity and indigeneity and employ them for the Akie. Furthermore the chapter visualizes in which ways and why the Akie are marginalized by their neighbours, as this is important to understand their motivation of utilizing their distinct ethnic status.

The generally small number of foragers in Kiteto is probably the reason why they have been frequently overlooked in current social studies. This is nevertheless surprising, because like in the case of many other hunting and gathering societies scholars assume that foragers have inhabited the area for centuries, and possibly are its autochthonous people.<sup>36</sup>

Kiteto is actually one of the few areas in Tanzania that still hosts hunter-gatherers. Only the districts of Simajiro, Kilindi and Mbulu host an equally remarkable number of foraging people. But like in most other regions of the country, the number of hunter-gatherers has decreased recently. Many hunter-gatherers are assimilating to their changing environment and frequently start to abandon their particular lifestyle in order to cultivate crops or to breed animals. Talking to former foragers in different areas of the District, I discovered that the reasons to dump their traditional way of life are manifold. So I was for example told that people stopped to forage because NGOs were inventing particular programs to settle them down, or because the natural environment in which they used to live had changed and so they

---

<sup>36</sup> Blackburn, "Fission, Fusion, and Foragers in East Africa: Micro- and Macroprocesses of Diversity and Integration among Okiek Groups", p. 188-212; Kaare, *The Symbolic Construction of Community Identity of the Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Northern Tanzania*; Maguire, "Il-Torobo", p. 127-142.

had to readapt. Hunting and gathering thus have become a rare phenomenon within the District and I met only few people that still relied on this subsistence strategy.

But whereas the process of changing livelihoods happened to take place silently in the past, it gained increasing attention nowadays. This is due to the intervention of local NGOs and private investors, who created a new awareness of former and current foraging people within the District and drew attention to them internationally. They proclaimed that Kiteto's hunter-gatherers possessed a comparably weak political and socioeconomic status, which threatens their "unique cultural heritage" and therefore their existence.<sup>37</sup> The UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) finally noted the plight of the foragers of northern-central Tanzania and moved to secure them from "extinction". The UNPFII was indeed founded in 1994 in order to protect the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide and to guarantee the survival of their cultural heritage.<sup>38</sup> The Forum declared that the disappearance of hunter-gatherers and their unique culture in northern-central Tanzania would have to be avoided at all cost. Hence, the UN appointed the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) to accelerate the relationship with local NGOs and other international benefactors to launch aid programs supporting the foragers of northern-central Tanzania. But before being able to establish a specific strategy a target group had to be identified.

In the year 2000/2001 the traditional foragers of the Maasai steppe were first mentioned in the yearbook of IWGIA<sup>39</sup>. The Work Group had named the hunters *Ndorobo*, which is a Kiswahili word that derives from the Maa name *Il-Torobo*. This term can be translated with "people of the forest" or "poor people without cattle", and has been usually applied by Maa-speakers to identify neighbouring societies that didn't possess cattle.<sup>40</sup> But because many neighboring societies traditionally also lived in a pastoral or agro-pastoral manner and therefore also possessed cows, scholars assumed *Il-Torobo* would identify a particular group of foragers.<sup>41</sup> In fact, also pastoralists who *lost* their cattle have been designated as such, and so the naming appears to be misleading. Current social anthropology usually calls the hunter-gatherers of northern-central Tanzania *Akie* (which means "people of

---

<sup>37</sup> NGO, Dorobo Funds, <http://dorobofund.squarespace.com>, (24.06.2011), Interview: Samwel Olekano, Local Head of the NGO KINNAPA (17.12.2010).

<sup>38</sup> Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues: History, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/history.html> (26.06.2011).

<sup>39</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2000/2001*, p. 251-260; at [http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/IW\\_2001.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/IW_2001.pdf) (26.06.2011).

<sup>40</sup> Kaare, "Saisee Tororeita: An Analysis of Complementarity in Akie Gender Ideology", p. 133.

<sup>41</sup> Maguire, "Il-Torobo", p. 127-142, Zwanenberg, "Dorobo Hunting and Gathering: A Way of Life or a Mode of Production", p. 12-21.

the land”), and from 2005 onwards also IWGIA took over this name.<sup>42</sup> The term traces back to the Kalenjin dialect Akiek, which was traditionally spoken by a small minority of foraging people that lived scattered throughout the Maasai steppe. Although the language itself is only rarely spoken today, the naming stuck internationally and thus is now commonly used. I am also going to use this term.

## *2.1 The Problem of Ethnic Classification*

Independently from the difficulties of naming, an identification and classification of Kiteto’s traditional foraging people appears to be complicated for other reasons. During my research in Kiteto I experienced that the cultural diversity among current and former hunter-gatherers is extraordinarily high. Although some of my informants seemed to share similar cultural values and sometimes claimed to possess a common history, their current living situation often has changed and frequently turned out to be incomparable. Several people seemed to be integrated into other societies and only few aspects of history appeared to be commonly shared. Nevertheless, both international aid agencies and current social scientific studies have continued to describe the Akie as a particular “indigenous ethnic group”. They refer mostly to the people’s foraging past and to their formerly shared language to make their argument.

This chapter focuses on Kiteto’s current and former hunter-gatherers. It discusses the diversity among them and reveals why it is difficult to identify them as an “ethnic group”. This section first introduces the general scientific concepts of ethnicity and indigeneity before focusing on the specific case of Kiteto.

### *2.1.1 The Concepts of Ethnicity and Indigeneity*

The concept of ‘ethnicity’ has been frequently addressed in social sciences. It has ancient origins and derives from the Greek term *ethnos* (originally translated as ‘nation’). In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when *ethnos* became an essential part of emerging social science discourse, its literal meaning changed. Scholars started to use the term to identify and categorize distinct groups of people who for several reasons (like, e.g. shared language or culture) seemed to belong together. The anthropologist Martin Sokefeld states that modern social anthropology commonly agrees that distinct groups of people might share particular group identities which

---

<sup>42</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2005*, p. 463-474, [http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/IW\\_2005.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/IW_2005.pdf) (26.06.2011).

are based on culture.<sup>43</sup> However, the existence of stable and unchangeable ethnic groups has been frequently contested. Scholars like Fredrik Barth argue that identities and cultures, which are supposed to form the body or substance of ethnic groups, are constantly in motion and alteration.<sup>44</sup> This means that the entire appearance of a group persistently moves and changes, which makes it difficult to identify it in any permanent manner.

However, even if it can be assumed that ethnic groups might exist at least momentary, it has to be questioned *how* they are defined and *by whom*. This appears to be tricky, because culture, which is the assumed basis of a shared group identity, is hard to define. According to Clifford Geertz the perception of culture is first of all subjective, because people use different parameters to measure it, and secondly just a snap-shot, because parameters might change.<sup>45</sup> But if that is the case, the entire concept of ethnic-groups has to be questioned, and its existence to be doubted. This has led to a voluminous social scientific debate which lasts until today. Essentialists or primordialists assume that certain parameters of culture are essential, ‘given’, don’t change, and are commonly understood. Hence, they argue that ethnic-groups exist due to an unchangeable essence that can be identified by people universally. Constructivists on the other hand argue that people have specific interests, which determine their understanding of such issues in general. They assume that an individual perception of something is constructed subjectively. Hence, they doubt the existence of ethnic groups generally and argue that such a classification is just an artificial construct, which derives from particular interests and motives.

The debate about ethnicity re-emerges frequently in the context of particular political and/or socioeconomic policies and marginalized people. This is especially true when so-called “indigenous peoples” are involved. Whereas essentialists and primordialists argue that some ethnic-groups possess an indigenous status which separates them from other societies, constructivists doubt the existence of such a status and criticize that an identification of indigenous peoples would be an artificial and constructed separation of people in order to accomplish specific interests or policies. This has led to an entire new debate in scientific discourse. While anthropologists like Justin Kendrick or Jerome Lewis<sup>46</sup> strongly support the idea of existent indigenous ethnic-groups, scholars like Adam Kuper<sup>47</sup> refrain from using this concept.

---

<sup>43</sup> Sokefeld, “Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology”, p. 417.

<sup>44</sup> Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretations of Cultures*, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Kendrick & Lewis, “Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and the Politics of the Term ‘Indigenous’”, p. 4-9.

<sup>47</sup> Kuper, “The Return of the Native”, p. 389-395.

As international politics are largely convinced of the existence of indigenous ethnic groups, policies have been implemented that highlight their specific status and try to secure their particular rights, especially in cases where these groups are marginalized or politically or socio-economically disadvantaged. Besides the Akie, also the foraging Hadzabe, and pastoral Barabaig and Maasai are internationally considered as “indigenous Tanzanian peoples”.<sup>48</sup> As the Tanzanian state has not yet implemented a particular concept or policy for dealing separately with indigenous peoples, it experiences growing international pressure.

### *2.1.2 The Akie within the debate of ethnicity and indigeneity*

According to the latest estimation of IWGIA of 2011, northern-central Tanzania hosts 5268 Akie.<sup>49</sup> Most of this people live in the district of Kiteto, and according to an interview with the local District Development Officer Joseph Maleba about 2000 current and former hunter-gatherers can be identified to live there.<sup>50</sup> Other smaller Akie populations are assumed to inhabit the neighboring districts of Simanjiro, Kilosa and Kilindi.

The anthropologist Bwire Kaare suggested a subdivision of the Akie into eight different clans that live scattered within the Maasai steppe.<sup>51</sup> However I did not find any evidence for the existence of such clans. The only attribution I found was a topographic allocation of the Akie to the areas of Napilo Konya, Ngapapa, Loolera or Namelok.

The reason why the traditional hunters of the Maasai steppe are frequently considered to be an indigenous ethnic group is their original semi-nomadic, foraging lifestyle and their distinct language. But, who are these people really? Can or should they be identified as a particular ‘ethnic group’ because of history, language and culture? And if yes, do they claim

---

<sup>48</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook : The Indigenous World 2011*, p. 423-430.

[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0454\\_THE\\_INDIGENOUS\\_ORLD-2011\\_eb.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0454_THE_INDIGENOUS_ORLD-2011_eb.pdf) (28.06.2011).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 423.

<sup>50</sup> Interview: District Development Officer Joseph Maleba, Kibaya, 04.11.2010.

<sup>51</sup> Kaare, “Saisee Tororeita: An Analysis of Complementarity in Akie Gender Ideology”, p. 133-134. M. Bakken, another anthropologist who also did research among the traditional foragers of Kiteto and Kilindi, identified seven Akie supra-clans in Tanzania: 1) the *Mosiro*, 2) the *Mokiri*, 3) the *Mediak* and/or *Kimee*, 4) the *Sele*, 5) the *Looju*, 6) the *Kisangara*, and 7) the *Kipatsu*.<sup>51</sup> To locate the particular clans she refers to an interview with a distinguished elder from Kijungu, who stated:

The *Mosiro* used to live along the Talami to Endoyo Naito Ngani. The *Mokiri* were once to be found in an area covering Kijungu, Loolera, Ngapapa, Napilo Konya, Larmakan through Ole Sarambe to Ole Moti. The *Mediak* and/or *Kimee* lived from Naiushi through Supaker to Oldonyo Onyokie, ending at Kimaki, the *Kisangara* from around Kwediboma, Mswaki, Kitingini, Kikwembe, the *Sele* from Ole Moti, Ole Saramba, Olturo Etonyoki to Elwai, to Kalema. The *Kipatsu* were to be found in Kalema, the Lakaria through Oloronyo ending at Nenjurai, the *Looju* at Terere through Oldonyo Dadaih to Loonderkes through Naanairabalaa.

themselves to be different from neighbouring societies? And how do others perceive them? By addressing these secondary questions in the following sub-sections of this chapter, I intend to answer the major query if the Akie can be perceived to be an indigenous ethnic group.

### *2.2.1 Akie Ethnic Identity and Current Living Conditions*

As Kiteto's traditional foragers originally lived in a semi-nomadic manner, they focused on particular regions to settle. Most of these spots were close to mountain areas, which provided generally more rainfall than the dry open plains and therefore guaranteed a better water supply. This attracted bee colonies, which depend on wild flowers that again need water to grow. As honey played a crucial role in the hunter's traditional lifestyle, the proximity to beehives to the homesteads was appreciated. In the past only men were supposed to leave the home for a longer time (sometimes for several days or weeks). This happened when they went to gather honey, to hunt big game or to visit relatives or friends somewhere else. Women and children generally stayed at home, and only accompanied the men in the case of crisis. They had to fetch water and collect firewood, gathered berries, leaves and roots, or repaired smaller damage on the houses.

According to my informants, most hunter-gatherers in the past (until about twenty years ago) lived in one of the following four areas of the District: Namelok, Loolera, Ngapapa and Napilo Konya. It is possible that some of them relate themselves to the *Mokiri* clan, which traditionally seemed to settle in these areas. However, I never heard my informants specifically relating to a specific *clan* or genealogical tree. All four mentioned names describe originally environmental peculiarities (usually mountains), but are nowadays also applied to designate villages. While Namelok is situated in the southern-west of the District, close to the highway to Matui, the other areas lie relatively remote in the dry central-east of Kiteto. Each of these spots was covered in the recent past (until about twenty years ago) with dry savanna bush land or Miombo Forest, and provided sufficient amounts of wild berries, honey trees, roots and game. But in all cases conditions have changed lately.

In *Namelok* the savanna has been widely cleared recently and today the entire area is cultivated. This was caused by the increasing influx of farming people which started about twenty years ago. The area's closeness to Kibaya Town and the easy access to the highway also caught people's attention. According to Land Officer Simon Makundo, the District Government appreciated the increasing popularity of Namelok and its transformation into

agrarian land.<sup>52</sup> It supported the newly arriving cultivators purposefully and even promoted the farming lifestyle to the “indigenous” people of the area. This had an enormous impact on the foraging and pastoral groups that had lived there before, and many people either started to adopt an agrarian or agro-pastoral way of life, or just left. Whereas Namelok in the past hosted mainly semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers and a small but important number of nomadic pastoralists, it has now become a prospering village of cultivators and agro-pastoralists. Due to continuous immigration and amalgamation of different people, the settlement is currently characterized by cultural diversity. According to one of my main informants, Baba Olingidi, who had moved with his family in 2007 from Namelok to Napilo Konya, the rise of the village began in the early 90s. He told me that at this time only a small temporary settlement of few Maasai pastoralists, and a relatively big community of semi-nomadic foragers were in the area. But within five years (until 1995) a permanent village was founded and from the mid-90s onwards the big game of the region disappeared.<sup>53</sup> When I visited Namelok there was no more sign of any savanna bush land and every single spot had been cultivated. My informant also told me, that the majority of former hunters had adopted an agro-pastoral way of life and most of them had intermarried with immigrated farmers or neighboring pastoralists. He assured me that only elders or close family members would be able to identify previous foragers as such, because there were no more obvious recognizable features.

Due to their more remote location in central-eastern part of the district and with much less rainfall, the other three “homelands” of Kiteto’s traditional foragers have not been affected so much by the phenomenon of migrant invasions. But nevertheless I only met very few hunter-gatherers and most people had switched recently to an agro-pastoral way of life. In Napilo Konya, situated closest to Kibaya Town, the change of subsistence took place within the last five to ten years. Although some elderly men still gather wild honey and regularly hunt for game, all inhabitants have started to cultivate, and the majority of people is focusing purely on farming maize and breeding animals. This change was initiated by two local NGOs, which closely work together with the District Development Office. As one major goal of national state policies is to strengthen the agrarian sector, the local administration of Kiteto has a specific interest in transforming the District’s dry savanna into cultivation land.<sup>54</sup> I was

---

<sup>52</sup> Interview: Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

<sup>53</sup> Open Interview: Baba Olingidi, Napilo Konya, 11.11.2010.

<sup>54</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania: The Tanzania Development Vision 2025, <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/vision.htm>; Halmashauri Ya Wilaya Ya Kiteto (Government of Kiteto District): Maliasili (Natural Resources), <http://www.manyara.go.tz/kurasa/halmashauri/lga2/maji/index.php> (29.06.2011).

also frequently told that two *Wazungu*<sup>55</sup>, who are well known and respected in the region were advising the people of Napilo Konya to cultivate. Like in Namelok, the traditional foragers of the region used to live in scattered, loose homesteads in the past. But meanwhile a permanent village was founded which hosts an increasing variety of peoples and cultures. According to the local village-census of 2010, the current adult-population reached 192 persons, of which 90 members have been identified as immigrants, whereas 102 people belong to the ‘indigenous inhabitants’.<sup>56</sup> In 2009 a shop was established that sells all basic necessities at high prices, and some years ago a church was built, which is sporadically used. The natural environment of the region changed rapidly during the last five years, due to the people’s effort to clear the savanna in order to get more cultivation land. Besides, newly arriving immigrants have established some further settlements during the last few years. As the people of these hamlets also clear the forests and bushes of Napilo Konya the savanna is literally decreasing every day. Village chairman Mbulu Kizota,<sup>57</sup> who once was a hunter himself, told me that the few still existing forests of the region only host small numbers of game. Hence, people who want to hunt have to leave the village and penetrate areas which are relatively far away from home (about 7-10 km). But as especially the presence of men is currently needed on the fields, most people had to abandon their former lifestyle to stay close to their properties. The same is true for traditional honey gathering. As wild bees need trees and flowers to produce honey they depend on baobab trees and savanna flowers. Progressing cultivation is actually destroying their habitat and so bees are increasingly difficult to find in Napilo Konya.

*Loolera* is a small hamlet situated in the furthest east of Kiteto and close to the town of Kijungu. With about twenty remaining adults that relate to the old previous foraging lifestyle, the settlement is the smallest traditional location of hunter-gatherers in the District. Because of its extreme dryness the area has been generally sparsely populated. My informants told me that the few foraging people who had lived there in the past either left the area or adopted a mainly pastoral lifestyle. The strong immigration of nomadic herders contributed to this. They started to occupy the few natural water wells of the region, and therefore forced the hunters to move or to adapt. The reason for the growth of pastoralists in the region was again the generally increasing expansion of cultivation land in the south and west of Kiteto. This had forced many herders to leave their customary pastures and search for new, non-agrarian areas to graze their cattle. Most previous hunter-gatherers, who didn’t leave to Kitwai (which is

---

<sup>55</sup> *Mzungu* is the singular Kiswahili word for “white person”; *Wazungu* is the plural form.

<sup>56</sup> Population Census of Napilo Konya from the 17.06.2010; The census is administered by the local *mwenyekiti* (chairman) Mbulu Kizota.

<sup>57</sup> Interview: Chairman Mbulu Kizota, Napilo Konya, 27.10.2010.

located in the neighboring District of Simanjiro) or one of the big towns of the District, searched shelter in the village of Ngapapa.

One of the biggest traditional populations of hunter-gatherers besides Napilo Konya lives in the village of *Ngapapa*. The settlement is situated at the slopes of a majestic mountain, which towers above the open plains of central-eastern Kiteto. Foragers have inhabited the area for centuries. But despite its relatively remote location the village became the first permanent settlement of traditional hunter-gatherers within the District. Due to the effort of a former District Member of Parliament, Benedict Loosurutia, and the fundraising support of the NGOs LAMP and KINNAPA, the village was founded in 1994. District officials and aid workers were sent to the area to ‘collect’ the scattered living hunter-gatherers and to convince them of the advantages of sedentarism. They helped former foragers to build permanent houses and to cultivate new farmland. Furthermore, they supported villagers with seeds and machines, and assisted them to transport and sell their crops on the weekly markets in Kibaya Town. In order to preserve at least parts of their former foraging culture the NGO KINNAPA also established a honey program. Artificial beehives were placed, in the form of wooden boxes, and the NGO started to advertise the “wild honey” of the Maasai steppe, which brought additional income to the people of the village.

In those places where the village is not bordered by the rocks of the mountain, maize fields surround the settlement today. Everybody cultivates crops and some people even possess livestock. In 2007 a primary school was established and all children are currently learning to read and write. Kiteto’s Water office provided an artificial water pump-station in 2009 so that the future water supply would be guaranteed (although the station recently broke down). According to the village census of 2010 Ngapapa hosts 307 people.<sup>58</sup> Chairman Ngoisolo, who was a hunter in the past and who heads the village since its foundation, told me that 87 traditional foragers could be identified to live in the village. He added that in contradiction to all other areas in Kiteto that host traditionally hunting and gathering societies, the status of foragers would be valued highly in Ngapapa.<sup>59</sup>

Summarizing the actual living situation of Kiteto’s traditional foragers, it has to be concluded that the absolute majority of original hunters completely abandoned their previous lifestyle in order to cultivate crops or to breed animals. This was either caused by strong external immigration (see Namelok); the impact of distinct policies (see Namelok, Ngapapa, Napilo Konya) or because of natural or cultural environmental changes that forced people to

---

<sup>58</sup> Population Census of Ngapapa from July 2010. The census was administered by the local *mwenyekiti* (chairman) Ngoisolo.

<sup>59</sup> Interview: Chairman Ngoisolo, Ngapapa, 22.11.2010.

react (see Loolera, Napilo Konya). Only a small number of mostly elderly people and some scattered families that do not live in one of the four traditional “foraging centers” of the district still maintain their hunting tradition. The gathering of honey on the other hand is a phenomenon that survived in areas that still host bees. The reasons why this cultural element seems to be sustained are difficult to guess, but honey played a crucial role in the foragers’ traditional lifestyle (in form of food, medicine, to produce alcoholic drinks and for the bride price) as in people’s present-day life, because it can be sold for relatively high prices (especially to NGOs).

### 2.2.2 *The Akiek Language*

The Maasai steppe has never been a mono-linguistic environment. Linguists discovered that the region hosted plenty of different languages that were not related to the widely spread Maa, which was probably introduced to the area during the “Maasai expansion” between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Because the pre-colonial history of interior East Africa is generally difficult to determine, scholars cannot make definite assertions about the precise linguistic situation in the past. Among the pre-Maa languages and dialects that were present in the dry savanna areas of northern-central Tanzania was possibly Akiek, which is classified to belong to the Nilo-Saharan language-family.<sup>60</sup>

Akiek is a language that was/is been spoken by several groups of foragers in the Tanzanian Maasai steppe. Because of its close linguistic relationship to the Okiek dialect, spoken in the central Rift Valley of current Kenya, scholars like Roderic Blackburn or Corinne Kratz have assumed that its speakers moved in an unknown past from central Kenya to northern Tanzania.<sup>61</sup> This assumption is supported by the fact that Akiek seemed to be explicitly used by hunter-gatherers. The first scientific report mentioning the foragers of the Tanzanian Maasai steppe and their distinct language dates from 1928. James Maguire, who researched in the area between Talamai (today Kijungu) and Kibaya Town, describes how he met several groups of hunter-gatherers (whom he called *Mosiro*, which turned to be out a clan-name of the Akie) that lived next to Maasai pastoralists. He stated:

---

<sup>60</sup> Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Okiek in Tanzania (alternate name Akiek), [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=oki](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=oki) (01.07.2011).

<sup>61</sup> Blackburn, “Fission, Fusion, and Foragers in East Africa: Micro- and Macroprocesses of Diversity and Integration among Okiek Groups”, p. 188-212; Kratz, “Are the Okiek really Masai? Or Kipsigis? Or Kikuyu?”, p. 355-368.

“All *Mosiro* [this term refers to particular *Akie* clan] speak Masai, but many of them do so very imperfectly. No Masai that I have met can speak the *Mosiro* tongue, through Masai who have come in contact to the Nandi tell me that the language spoken by the *Mosiro* to-day seems vaguely reminiscent of the Nandi speech.”<sup>62</sup>

The Nandi-language Maguire is talking about was identified to belong to the Nilo-Saharan language family. Scientists classified it as a macro-language that possessed several minor languages and dialects (eventually also *Akiek*) and which originated in the Kenyan Rift Valley. As it is only distantly related to Maa, scholars presume that it emerged independently from it in northern-central Tanzania.<sup>63</sup>

According to my data, today the *Akiek*-language is only spoken by a small minority of elderly people. Some of my informants had the ability to understand it but I found only two adult men who were able to communicate fluently in it. The younger generations meanwhile have adopted Maa as their mother tongue, and Maa is in fact the most widely distributed language throughout the region, although the influence of Kiswahili is also growing (especially as alphabetization increases). Maguire already foresaw the disappearance of *Akiek* and noted:

The language of the *Mosiro* is dying, as any language except masai tends to do in the Masai country. I have asked many *Mosiro* to give me the names of various common objects, and I have often been given a Masai name, my informant protesting that he knew no other.<sup>64</sup>

It is doubtful whether it is possible to preserve *Akiek*. But due to the efforts of local NGOs, some private investors, and the linguistic faculty of the University of Dar es Salaam, the idea was born to ‘reinvent’ the language. Tanzanian scholars were recently sent to Ngapapa in order to record and document *Akiek*. The chairman of the village appreciated this step and reassured me that the language “shall be re-installed soon”.<sup>65</sup> However, it has to be stated that Kiteto’s previous and current hunter-gatherers abandoned both their traditional foraging way of life and their customary language. Therefore they appear to be difficult to revive purely on the basis of external stimuli.

---

<sup>62</sup> Maguire, “Il-Torobo”, p. 138.

<sup>63</sup> Kratz, “Are the *Okiek* really Masai? Or *Kipsigis*? Or *Kikuyu*?”, p. 355-368.

<sup>64</sup> Maguire, “Il-Torobo”, p. 138.

<sup>65</sup> Interview: Chairman Ngaisolo, Ngapapa, 22.11.2010.

### 2.2.3 Akie Perceptions of Identity

Most people I met during my research claimed to belong to a distinct ethnic group by claiming a specific cultural heritage. According to my data, the valuation of this inheritance is very different from individual to individual. But whereas especially adults and elders aim to maintain their cultural traditions, lots of younger people (and especially females) do not consider them to be important anymore. Many elder men and women highlight for example particular oral traditions (like the creation myth), but most of them simultaneously claim to be Christian. They told me also that language would play an important role in identification, although none was able to speak the Akie language properly. During my stay I actually talked only to one person that was entirely fluent in Akiek. Younger people on the other hand responded usually that they perceive themselves as Akie-members because of their *ancestry*. But notably girls, who married into other groups, frequently do not consider themselves to be part of the Akie community anymore. The differences in people's self-perception currently impede a clear identification of a shared Akie group identity.

When I asked the former *mwenyekiti* (chairman)<sup>66</sup> of Napilo Konya what makes a person an Akie he responded: the hunt. He explained me that the crucial difference between Akie and other peoples would always be the chase for game. I was surprised, because I knew that he had twenty acres of cultivation land, which secured his subsistence and covered his needs for the entire year. But when I confronted him with this observation he just smiled and told me that he had never stopped to hunt. The elderly man explained that hunting animals depicts more than just a lifestyle, because every hunt also recalls the spirits of the ancestors and god himself. Some other adult men supported this statement by telling me that they would hunt regularly "to value ancestral traditions". Some of these men lived in denser inhabited areas that hosted only little game. They stated that they came not only to visit friends and relatives in Napilo Konya, but also to hunt.

The linkage between the hunt for wild game on the one side, and the worshipping of god and the ancestors the other side, is generally anchored in the creation myth. Bwire Kaare, who did research on the traditional beliefs of Tanzania's foragers in the early 90s, has recorded this story:

The central god *Tororeita* (who created the earth and all life) called both an Akie and a Maasai man to heaven to teach them new ways of subsisting (because both lost their

---

<sup>66</sup> Interview: Former Chairman Mzee Mwenyekiti, Napilo Konya, 07.11.2010.

subsistence acumen in primordial time). After talking to them, god gave both men a *makata* (honey gathering bag), which he forbade them to open until they would reach home. During their journey back the two men heard whistling noises out of the bag. But whereas the Maasai ignored them and headed home, the Akie man opened the *makata* and a bunch of wild animals escaped. When the Maasai man opened the bag at home domesticated animals came out. The disappointed Akie returned back to god and complained because his bag had hosted wild animals. *Tororeita* reprimanded the man and explained him that the animals in the other bag had been originally wild too, but because the Maasai had followed his instructions and did not open the bag early they had become domesticated. As the Akie asked how to continue, god gave him a bow and arrows and instructed him to hunt the animals he lost. For that reason the Akie became hunter-gatherers whereas the Maasai started to breed animals.<sup>67</sup>

As most traditional foragers of the District claim to be Christian, the maintenance of respect for the creation myths by some elders appeared surprising to me. But by talking to Mama Kimbey,<sup>68</sup> I learned that the belief in Christianity does not necessarily mean to forget about original Akie principles. On the contrary, she argued that true Christians keep their forefathers and history in good memory, like the biblical commandment instructs them. My informant herself was an old woman of about sixty years, who lived her entire life in Napilo Konya. She had been married to two men and gave birth to two children. Like most people in the village she had converted to Christianity in the late 90s (exact date unknown), when Father Stefano (a German missionary<sup>69</sup>) worked in Kiteto.

Young adults and teenagers raised in the last ten to fifteen years experienced big changes and hence have a different perception of what it means to be Akie. Many of them have been sent to schools, went regularly to Christian churches and lived in environments based on crop cultivation instead of foraging.

Abel, for example, is a young adult of 22 years who was born in Napilo Konya but who went to school in Ndedo and Arusha, twenty-five kilometres away. As his education was sponsored by a private fund, he left his family-compound when he was twelve. The fund covered full accommodation in the schools as well as education itself, and so he returned only

---

<sup>67</sup> Kaare, "Cosmology, Belonging and Construction of Community Identity: The Politics of Being Hunter-Gatherers among the Akie-Dorobo of Tanzania", p. 25-46.

<sup>68</sup> Interview: Mama Kimbey, Napilo Konya, 13.12.2010.

<sup>69</sup> Father Stefano [who? Give family name] was a Protestant German missionary who worked in Kiteto with his wife, especially in Kibaya. He lived in the region for about 15 years and focused on evangelizing the 'pagans' of the District.

for holidays to Napilo Konya. When I met him for the first time in October 2010, he recently had finished school and just was back in village. Together with his brother he had opened the first small kiosk in the village, which provides a small range of soft drinks, candy, beauty products and basic needs (like sugar, tea etc.). Talking to him gave me an entire new perspective of Akie daily life because unlike other youngsters, who herded animals or helped their families to cultivate, Abel only ran his business and therefore stayed close to his shop. When we talked about Akie-identity, he told me that he considers himself Akie only because of his ancestry. He admitted that he never went to hunt before and that he does not know how to climb a Baobab tree in order to find and open a beehive. But Abel was a respected member of the village-community, which did not exclude him and rather was proud to have an educated member. Other youngsters like Marcelo or Samuel, who also received private education funds (for primary schools), returned to their compounds and got involved in family businesses. This meant that they started to herd animals and began to cultivate crops. Marcelo got the responsibility from his uncle to guard a small herd of cattle and goats, whereas Samuel cleared a spot of pristine land in order to cultivate maize. Both of them had a basic knowledge of foraging traditions and had hunted when they were younger. They knew the oral traditions and had a basic understanding of Akiek, although they communicated purely in Maa or Kiswahili. When I asked them why they consider themselves Akie they also told me: because of their ancestry. In their understanding, the forefathers determine the heritage of people and hence, dictate belonging. This was a remarkable statement, because I knew that Samuel's father was a born Chagga from Kilimanjaro area who migrated to Kiteto and married an Akie woman. Confronting Samuel with this issue he responded that his father had assimilated smoothly. He told me that marriage; the payment of a bride price in a traditional way, and the participation in specific traditional rituals had made him an Akie.<sup>70</sup>

According to my data, especially young women reflect differently on the question of ethnic belonging from their male counterparts. Most women to whom I talked became either part of Akie society because they were born in it and never left it, or because they married an Akie man and therefore got assimilated. Traditionally girls were wedded when they were about thirteen or fourteen years old. After marriage they left the family compound and moved to the house or compound of their husbands. Whereas the choice of a husband was in the past rather related to inter-family boundaries, it became recently a very economic issue. Mama Kimbey told me for example that she was allowed to choose her two husbands freely, as far as the men was able to pay the usual bride-price (which consisted originally of honey, ivory and

---

<sup>70</sup> Group Interview: Abel, Marcelo, Samuel, in Napilo Konya.

skins). She and most women of her generation learned about cultural values and traditions just like Akie men. One reason for that was probably the Akie's relatively egalitarian social structure, which gave women a comparatively high status.<sup>71</sup> This seems to have changed recently. According to my host Baba Olingidi the choice of a decent husband nowadays mainly depends on economic reasons.<sup>72</sup> Hence, a possible fiancé has better chances to get accepted by the bride's family if he is able to pay a higher bride price (preferably in cattle, goats or money). Baba Olingidi told me that young girls are actually urged to marry men who had gained some economic wealth and could feed a family. This had led increasingly to inter-marriages between Akie women and neighboring Maasai men, who are frequently economically stronger than their Akie counterparts. For the daily life of traditionally foraging societies the change of bride-price-currency had an additional cultural impact. Because many former hunters could compete equally with other men for girls, they are not able to marry at all. Hence, I met many adult men, who have not yet been married and rather struggle with their own survival rather than finding a wife. As parents realize that their girls will probably marry other men, they raise them differently nowadays. Mama Kimbey told me that the focus in girls' education had shifted from obeying cultural values to a rather practical training. She argued that most girls actually lack the knowledge of basic Akie cultural traditions and rather get educated to become proper housewives in order to get a good match.

#### *2.2.4 The Perception of Kiteto's Traditional Hunter-Gatherers by their Neighbours*

Neighbouring societies usually perceive Kiteto's traditional foragers to be the District's "autochthonous people". They identify them as the first inhabitants of the region. Hence, they give the Akie a particular status which differentiates them from other people. Especially many Maasai pastoralists reassured me that the Akie used to live in the area long before their own ancestors arrived. With the arrival of pastoral people in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the political and socioeconomic environment of the region shifted. Power was taken by invading herding groups and the autochthonous population was forced to leave their customary land and/or coerced to adapt to a different lifestyle. Only few people were able to maintain their distinct traditional livelihood, and the anthropologist Roderic Blackburn assumes that the changes within the political and socioeconomic environment had a big impact on the various foraging groups of East Africa in general. He argues that current cultural differences among different

---

<sup>71</sup> Kaare, *The Symbolic Construction of Community Identity of Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Northern Tanzania*; Bakken, *Becoming Visible*.

<sup>72</sup>Open Interview: Baba Olingidi, Napilo Konya, 11.11.2010

Okiek groups (to which he counts the Akie) have to be partly explained by changing circumstances in pre-colonial times.<sup>73</sup>

From the early 18<sup>th</sup> century until today pastoral Maa-speakers have formed the majority of Kiteto's population and therefore became direct neighbours to the traditional foragers of the District. This neighbourship affected both societies lastingly, because unlike other societies that were pushed aside and/or forced to re-adopt another livelihood, the Maasai didn't force Kiteto's foragers to change their lifestyle. Kaare, who engaged particularly with the Akie's inter-group relations, identified several reasons for this form of 'charity'. His basic assertion is that the Maasai depended on foragers because they did not gather honey (which is considered to be food as well as medicine) and because they needed the hunters to prepare specific rituals.<sup>74</sup>

One of these rituals is the so-called *jando*, which is the initiation ceremony for young men and women into the adult societies of their distinct groups. The ceremony has been traditionally celebrated by both, pastoralists and foragers. During my stay in Kiteto I attended one *jando*, which was held secretly, because the Tanzania state law forbids female circumcision, which is part of the formal procedure. Both pastoralists and traditional foragers attended the ritual and reassured me that the ceremony wouldn't be possible with the absence of one party. The pastoralists provided meat, by slaughtering cattle, and tea, whereas the Akie brought honey beer. Young boys and girls between eight and fourteen were singing and dancing to prepare for their circumcision, while the adults were eating and drinking. I stayed with a group of elders who were observing the spectacle and enjoyed each others company. The elders explained me that the ritual would initiate the youngsters into the adult society, and that no person could marry and found a family without going through the procedure of *jando*. They told me that part of the ritual was to create a boundary between the youngsters and the ancestral spirits that live in the earth. Therefore the spirits had to be called, which was done by a particular Akie elder. In the ritual, the Akie's basic task was to provide alcohol and "to communicate with the divine world". However, according to the renowned anthropologist James Woodburn, even the act of circumcision itself has betimes been performed by a *Dorobo* elder.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately I was not allowed to observe this particular part of the ceremony. The elders continued to explain me that *jando* is not the only rite shared by traditional pastoralists and foragers. They mentioned other performances, like funerals of important warriors or

---

<sup>73</sup> Blackburn, "Okiek History", p. 53-55

<sup>74</sup> Kaare,

<sup>75</sup> Woodburn, "Indigenous Discrimination: The Ideological Basis for Local Discrimination against Hunter-Gatherer Minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa", p. 357.

weddings that are traditionally celebrated together. However, I never participated or observed any such ritual.



Picture 2: Several Akie-youngsters in preparation of the *jando*

Marriages between foragers and pastoralists were another shared feature that which reshapes the traditional boundaries of both groups. The anthropologist Roderic Blackburn reports that intertribal weddings between Maasai and Okiek (including Akie) have been taken place for a long time. He refers especially to the times of pre-colonial Maasai-warfare and rinderpest epidemics in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>76</sup> During this era different pastoral clans raided each others livestock and also lots of cattle died because of diseases. The clans were fighting for hegemony over pasture land, power status, and the survival of their herds, which were already decimated by the pest. Famines broke out and many pastoralists suffered from hunger and the loss of cattle. Some of them found shelter in foraging societies and frequently married into their host communities. When the famines were over some traditional herders started to return to livestock herding, whereas others continued to hunt and gather. However, also in earlier and following eras inter-group marriages occurred. Especially during the last few decades, 'intertribal' weddings increased again, because members from originally non-

---

<sup>76</sup> Blackburn, "Fission and Fusion in East Africa: Micro- and Macropocesses of Diversity and Integration among Okiek Groups", p.192.

foraging communities are frequently able to pay higher bride prices than their traditionally hunting counterparts and hence are often favoured by the families of the bride. By talking to several young Maasai warriors, I learned that marrying an Akie woman recently became very fashionable, because the bride prices for these girls are generally lower than for Maasai-girls. They told me that especially young men who possess only few livestock and little money would approach Akie women. This statement was affirmed by some elderly hunters from Napilo Konya, who told me that most bride prices for Akie girls would be comparably little, because many families were economically weak. They complained that the change of livelihoods had some miserable effects on their society, because many Akie started to cultivate crops or to breed animals without having a starting capital and therefore would be disadvantaged compared to their neighbours who already gained some wealth. According to the elders the new dependency on crop cultivation and livestock raising had two major effects on marriage: 1) it changed the traditional currency of bride price from honey, skins and ivory to livestock and money, and secondly it forced especially the poor Akie-families to give their daughters for a comparably low bride price to ‘foreign dandies’, who were frequently able to pay better than the young economically weak Akie men.

However, the relationship between Kiteto’s pastoralists and foragers has never been equal. Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities always looked down on the hunting and gathering societies of the District. They perceived them as ‘wild’ and ‘primitive’, which is already indicated by the disrespectful naming *Il-Torobo* (which means literally “people from the forest” or “people without cattle”, and has been applied by herding Maa-speakers to identify “foreigners” who did not breed animals and therefore were not regarded as equals). By using this term, the herding Maasai intend to differentiate themselves from others and to highlight their own status. I experienced during my stay that also Akie who had achieved to get a significant number of livestock were designated with this term. By talking to a young Maasai warrior of my age, I learned that although the relationship between foragers and pastoralists had been always close, putting both groups on an equal level would be insulting for a Maasai. He told me that the Maasai were the ‘natural masters’ of the *Il-Torobo*, and that foragers traditionally ‘had to obey pastoralists’.<sup>77</sup> This statement was supported also by Julius Nairinga Olekeiya, the chairman of Partimbo Ward, who administers the villages of Partimbo, Kimana, Bighiri and Ilera. He (by himself a Maasai) stated that whenever Maasai elders would come to a political agreement on the local level (which means within a particular

---

<sup>77</sup> Open Interview: Joshua, Kibaya, 16.10.2010.

village council) all Akie members would follow the resolution without questioning it.<sup>78</sup> My Akie informants never denied these statements and used to smirk about them. They told me that they knew of their traditional meaning for Maasai communities, but that they would never dare to provoke their betimes ignorant neighbours.

### *2.3 Discrimination and Marginalization of the Akie in Kiteto*

The disparagement of ethnic minorities by bigger ethnic groups is a frequently observed phenomenon in Africa. According to James Woodburn particularly hunter-gatherers are often confronted with distinct forms of discrimination, which again might cause forms of marginalization. He identifies five different motives for discrimination: 1) hunter-gatherers are politically weak, 2) hunter-gatherers appear impoverished, 3) hunter-gatherers are identified with the bush or forest, 4) hunter-gatherers are identified with animals, and 5) hunter-gatherers are relatively unconstrained in their dealings with each other and with outsiders.<sup>79</sup> Relating on the traditionally foraging societies of northern-central Tanzania, Woodburn argues that pastoral Maasai are imposing a picture which doesn't really represent the people because it neglects their true identity.<sup>80</sup>

According to my data the discrimination of Akie by their neighbours has been a daily reality in Kiteto for a long time. Hence, some of my older informants told me that they already experienced forms of discrimination and marginalization in the past. They particularly related to the times of Nyerere's villagization politics during the 70s, when lots of Akie were forced to leave the savannas in order to move to villages that had been established by the national government. According to my informants the majority of Kiteto's traditional foragers was just taken out of the bush, and became settled at the fringes of artificial settlements. Within these villages the Akie lived together with traditional pastoralists and cultivators, who avoided and discriminated them because of their distinct former livelihood. My informants told me that they were widely banned from public village-life, and that other villagers forced them to live in distinct squatter areas at the fringes of settlements. When I asked them how they reacted, most elders just smirked and told me that they finally left the villages in order to return to the savannas. These statements are confirmed by the data of Bwire Kaare, who states that "...although the Akie initially resisted forced settlement, some of them succumbed to

---

<sup>78</sup> Open Interview: Chairman of Partimbo Ward Julius Nairinga Olekeeiya, Kibaya, 22.12.2010.

<sup>79</sup> Woodburn, "Indigenous Discrimination: The Ideological Basis for Local Discrimination against Hunter-Gatherer Minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa", p. 349-353

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 357

government demands and are now leading a sedentary village life. But others resisted and returned to the bush and still lead a hunting and gathering life.”<sup>81</sup>

However, the Akie of Kiteto did not only experience discrimination and marginalization in the past. Even today people face various forms of marginalization. Some of my female informants told me for example about their problems of going to the market and trading commodities. They stated that other people were avoiding their wares because they were assumed them to poison them.<sup>82</sup> The association of Akie people to poison has led to negative labelling and to everyday social and economic marginalization. The women told me that selling foodstuff on the market would always be a challenge because people hesitate to buy it. They added that the hostile attitude of other people was forcing them to decrease the price of their goods, which again explained why they only gained so little profit. When I talked with a Maasai informant about this phenomenon he just shook his shoulders and told me that “these women should stop to sell wares on the public market”. He stated that Akie-women did not attend these kinds of markets in the past and that people’s suspicion would be just normal. Indeed, the fact that Akie women started to visit local markets in order to sell wares seems to be a rather recent trend. According to my interpretation, it is a consequence of the Akie’s latest change of livelihoods, which aligned people’s distinct lifestyles, and created new forms of coexistence.

Another form of marginalization is the exclusion of Akie from political posts. I have not met any self-professed Akie within the Regional District Government. Although most officials are locals that are born and raised in Kiteto the composition of regional administration is almost entirely given to traditional herders - which means Maasai.<sup>83</sup> According to my informants, no Akie ever managed to get appointed to any higher political position within the District. However, also on the lowest level of political representation (the village-level) only a few Akie ever succeeded to receive a nomination. Only in the village of Ngapapa, to be discussed elsewhere, and in the village of Kimana, which is the head-village of Napilo Konya and also to be presented somewhere else, some Akie managed to enter a village-council. This means that the Akie are widely excluded from local and regional decision-making. Marianne Bakken, who conducted research on the Akie in 1999, argued that

---

<sup>81</sup> Kaare, “Coping with State Pressure to Change: How the Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Tanzania Seek to Maintain their Cultural-Identity”, p. 219

<sup>82</sup> As the Akie hunted traditionally with poisoned arrows, they knew how to produce venom and allegedly for this reason were avoided and feared by their neighbours ever since.

<sup>83</sup> The Regional District Government consists of elected members that have been appointed by the assemblies of the distinct Wards (which consists from the chairmen of all villages, who again are appointed by their particular village-councils that are elected by the distinct village-assemblies) and of Governmental Officials, who are appointed by the Nation State.

traditional hunter-gatherers were already politically excluded in the late '90s. As she found out:

“They [the Akie] have limited access to a seat on the village council (total seats 25) as Councillors on the basis of pure numbers. According to my experience their village neighbours also have no interest in voting in ‘poor Dorobo’ who in their eyes do not share important values with themselves.”<sup>84</sup>

The social, political and economic marginalization of the Akie forced them to develop distinct modes of adaptation that are going to be discussed in the following chapters.

### *Summary*

This chapter exemplified the difficulties of identifying the Akie an indigenous ethnic group. As the section has shown, it is not easy to clearly differentiate the Akie and their neighbours, because people have been always intermarrying or have been linked in various ways. It also has to be stated that central cultural elements, like the initiation rite or language, are shared by people from different cultural backgrounds. However, the chapter has also demonstrated that people themselves differentiate from each other and that assigning someone to a distinct ethnic group is not an easy matter, either for locals or for foreign observers, including social scientists. It is a fact that people who possess a foraging tradition have different ideas about their cultural heritage and status in life compared to other, more powerful actors. Important to note is that these people are discriminated and marginalized by their neighbours, which determines their particular social status.

This chapter section has also introduced into the economics of identity. As stated, most Akie had to change their modes of subsistence, and they clearly adapted to another economic environment. Thus the production and disposal of crops and animal breeding have influenced the way people perceive economic value. While neither crops nor livestock carried a big value or appraisal in the past, they are nowadays accepted currencies. I have elaborated on how important these elements have become, for example for the payment of bride-price. This again has influenced the way pastoralists perceive their ‘wild’ neighbours. Although inter-ethnic marriages have existed ever since, the transformation of the Akie’s subsistence has made their girls more attractive to young herders, reinforcing the Akie’s position of dependency and contributing to a weakening of their ethnic group identity.

---

<sup>84</sup> Bakken, *Becoming Visible*, p. 169

## **Chapter 3**

### **Environmental Change and Resource Competition**

As indicated previously, the District of Kiteto underwent major environmental changes within the past few years that strongly influenced people's livelihoods and therefore also shaped people's identities. The District transformed from a mainly pastoral habitat that mainly hosted herders and foragers, to an agrarian country. This had major natural and social impact. The Akie have been part of this process and lots of them stopped to hunt and gather and started to cultivate crops.

However, the transformation of subsistence has not been easy and smooth for all inhabitants of the area. While some people profited from change, because crop-cultivation was subsidized by the state and therefore appeared to be more lucrative than traditional forms of subsistence, others faced new difficulties. Many of these emerging difficulties can be linked to the rise of resource-competition, which arose in the region about twenty years ago. Especially the contention for land and water has increased rapidly. Whereas water has been a scarce resource for centuries, the struggle for land that can be observed today is a rather recent phenomenon. According to my informants land competition for distinct demarcated areas only emerged within these last twenty years, and has increased rapidly for several reasons. In many cases it degenerated into sometimes violent conflicts. Land-struggles have become a common daily-life-reality for most of Kiteto's inhabitants. Although specific laws try to guarantee a generally equal and fair access to resources, some people appear to become marginalized by this increasing competition. This is especially true for the traditional hunter-gatherers of the District, who possess a comparatively weak political and socioeconomic status, and therefore are often disadvantaged to compete for resources. In many cases their legal claims are not considered and hence they fail to accomplish their rights.

According to my data a big number of Akie lost parts of their farming land to foreign intruders, and many of them struggle to gain access to water. They developed various strategies to secure their livelihood and to fight for their legal rights, but without success. These strategies differ from region to region, and individual to individual. While some Akie formed coalitions within distinct places and established villages, in order to face the new,

threatening situation, others left their customary homes and moved to new peaceful spaces, or persevered and pleaded for international help. With the exception of one distinct village that succeeded to communicate its legal claims, most of Kiteto's traditional foragers failed to accomplish their demands, and therefore are still threatened by the effects of resource competition.

This chapter engages with the environmental changes and the rise of resource-competition in Kiteto and identifies the reasons. The analysis of resource-competition is important to understand how a changing natural and social environment might affect people's livelihood (which is then highlighted in chapter 4), and why people act the way they act. The examination of resource-competition is also important for understanding how distinct economic processes, like the distribution of land and water, express in Kiteto. Chapter 3 first introduces how the competition for resources might correlate with population-growth and the rise of conflicts, before it explores how and why it originated in Kiteto.



Picture 3: A natural water-well during the dry season

### 3.1 Population Growth, Resource Scarcity and Conflict

It is frequently argued that environmental scarcity in combination with strong population growth can cause resource competition, which again might lead to an outbreak of violent conflicts. In fact this presumption has been backed by several striking examples, like the horrible genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which indeed had a demographic and environmental component.<sup>85</sup> The famous American environmentalist and neo-Malthusian Homer Dixon predicts, that the competition for renewable resources (like land and water) will increase within the next fifty years.

He states that the world's population will quintuple at this time, which will cause resource scarcities in many areas that might lead to violent conflicts.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore Dixon forecasts that "...coming generations will also see the widespread depletion and degradation of aquifers, rivers, and other water resources; the decline of many fisheries and perhaps significant climate change".<sup>87</sup> This theory has been picked up by other influential writers like Jared Diamond, who exemplifies in his bestseller *Collapse* several ancient and recent civilizations that either disappeared already, or are currently in decline. According to his interpretation, environmental scarcities and the competition for renewable resources might not only contribute to the rise of conflicts and competition, but can even lead to the collapse of entire societies.<sup>88</sup>

The argument that environmental degradation and population growth must be considered to understand particular cases of resource-competition and "environmental conflicts" is striking and cannot be dismissed. Nevertheless, it has to be treated thoughtfully. Distinct scholars criticize Dixon's and Diamond's theories as being too broad and too simplistic. Nils Gleditsch for example argues that demographic pressure can only partly explain environmental scarcity and the rise of conflicts. He states that other components like cultural, political or socioeconomic factors also have to be considered. Gleditsch identifies nine different reasons that contest Dixon's theory : 1) there is a lack of clarity over what is meant by "environmental conflict"; 2) researchers engage in definitional and polemic exercise rather than analysis; 3) important variables are neglected, notably political and economic factors which have a strong impact on conflict and mediate the influence of resource and environmental factors; 4) some models become so large and complex that they are virtually

---

<sup>85</sup> Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, p. 311-329;

Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict", p. 17

<sup>86</sup> Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflicts", p. 5-40

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>88</sup> Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, p. 1-24

untestable; 5) cases are selected on values of the dependent variable; 6) the causality of the relationship is reversed; 7) postulated events in the future are cited as empirical evidence; 8) studies fail to distinguish between foreign and domestic conflict; and 9) confusion reigns about the appropriate level of analysis.<sup>89</sup>

Examples that support Gleditsch's criticism are manifold, and can be especially found by looking into the cases of hunter-gatherers. As stated in the previous chapter, many traditional foragers experience currently marginalization and are politically and socio-economically disadvantaged. They are vulnerable for all kind of changes that affect their environment (not only demographic pressure). The foraging San in Botswana for example struggled especially between the 70s and 90s against the loss of their customary lands – a loss that was not caused by population growth at all. They had been replaced from their land by the national government because it wanted to use the land differently: for developmental, mining and conservation purposes. The struggle was largely fought in courts and violent conflicts were the exception. As the San were only a small minority, armed resistance wouldn't have helped their case but just worsen the situation. Due to international help and pressure from the international community Botswana's foragers managed to gain a strong backing and finally prevailed. Consequently the government permitted distinct San groups during the 90s to return back to their customary land. However, discussions about land-property within the Kalahari are still ongoing.<sup>90</sup> The example of the San shows basically two things: 1) competition for scarce, renewable resources is not necessarily bound to population growth; 2) contention about resources can be solved peacefully and does not by definition need to cause violent conflicts.

The particular case of Kiteto's traditional foragers cannot be compared with San's resource struggles. As the following section of this chapter will clarify, demographic change and environmental scarcity play an important role for the rise of resource-competition in Kiteto. However, like Gleditsch argues, both components are just part of the puzzle and therefore have to be integrated into one picture.

### *3.2 Reasons for Resource Competition in Kiteto*

For the specific case of Kiteto, demographic pressure (in form of a quickly growing population) certainly contributes to increasing resource competition and the rise of conflicts.

---

<sup>89</sup> Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature", p. 381

<sup>90</sup> Hitchcock, "'We Are the First People': Land, Natural Resources and Identity in the Central Kalahari, Botswana", p. 797-824

The improvement of infrastructure, and the decrease of mortality, as well as the increase of immigrating agriculturalists led to a rising population. According to the latest national population census of 2002, the number of Kiteto's inhabitants increased from 74,469 (in 1988) to 152,296 (in 2002). This is equitable to an annual growth-rate of about 5.1%, which makes the District one of the fastest growing areas in entire Tanzania (national growth rate about 2.8% annually).<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, demographic pressure and environmental scarcity are only two aspects of increasing resource competition. As my data will show political and socioeconomic status and the dispensation of law are at least as important to understand the current situation. This sub-chapter first introduces to the District's general resource-situation and its history, before discussing further variables of present-day competition, like general population growth, the improvement of infrastructure, changes in people's modes of subsistence, the increasing immigration of agro-pastoralists, and the execution of law.

### *3.2.1. Historical Survey of Resource Competition in Kiteto*

Although the competition for Kiteto's scarce resources increased during the past two decades, it is not a new phenomenon. Especially rivalries for water have existed ever since, whereas contentions for demarcated pitches of land are supposed to be a rather recent development. This is due to Kiteto's natural environment, which lacks natural water-reservoirs, like rivers or lakes, but also provides huge areas of sparsely inhabited land. According to the Tanzanian Private Sector Foundation, the natural surface of the District doesn't hold water at all, while it offers an area that extends for 16645 sq. km.<sup>92</sup> However, as many kilometres of land are normally flooded during the annual rainy-season, this estimation is not entirely correct, and just indicates how seriously scarce water is.

Scholars like Galaty or Spear assume that the generally hostile environment of the Maasai steppe is one basic reason to explain, why pastoralism and hunting and gathering caught on throughout the area until present times. They propose that a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle is generally much more flexible than a sedentary livelihood, and therefore advantageous to people as the only way to survive in particularly arid and hostile surroundings. Their basic argument is that mobility enables pastoral and foraging societies to exploit scarce resources by chance, because they do not depend on a specific area. It is easier

---

<sup>91</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, National Bureau of Statistics, 2002 Population and Housing Census, p. 18 [http://www.nbs.go.tz/index.php?view=article&catid=57%3Acensuses&id=116%3A2002-population-and-housing-censuses&option=com\\_content&Itemid=82](http://www.nbs.go.tz/index.php?view=article&catid=57%3Acensuses&id=116%3A2002-population-and-housing-censuses&option=com_content&Itemid=82) (10.08.2011)

<sup>92</sup> Tanzanian Private Sector Foundation, Region Information: Manyara, <http://www.tpsftz.org/mapinfo.php?region=21> (16.08.2011).

for them to access all kind of assets compared to stable cultivators.<sup>93</sup> It is known also, that many East African pastoralists possess pack animals (like donkeys), who support them to transport scarce resources (like water). They become even more flexible because they are less dependent on a particular area.<sup>94</sup>

However, as herders, hunter-gatherers and livestock need to be provided with lots of water, and springs are generally rare in Kiteto, competition for this scarce resource has existed ever since. According to Josua, a young Maasai warrior, who proudly showed me his cattle, especially pastoral clans have always struggled for the predominance over particular water-wells. He told me that also before artificial wells and pumps were established, conflicts for water were part of herders' daily life. He added that the first group of people that reach a specific well usually try to maintain its particular dominance by demonstratively occupying the surrounding area. Their goal was to demonstrate strength in order to keep other people away. After watering the livestock and storing some water for the coming journey, the entire group usually moves on. Especially during the dry season lots of people appeared simultaneously at a particular well, which might cause serious rivalries, because some sources just could not provide enough water to supply all those in need.<sup>95</sup>

In order to avoid conflict situations at a well most pastoralists also learned how to dig for ground-water. Another informant stated that already young children know where to find the best places to grub. The Akie developed an additional strategy to avoid the competition for water. As their need of water was smaller than that of herders they additionally fetched the water from baobab trees. An elder told me that these trees stored lots of rain water in its barks, which was used by the Akie. The technique, of cutting little holes into a Baobab tree in order to reach its water storing barks, has been also described for other hunter-gatherers. Hence, it is known for example that the Kung or San of the Kalahari use the same strategy.<sup>96</sup>

In contrast to water, the competition over land is supposed to be a much more recent development in Kiteto. However, this is not entirely true. Although land has never been the same scarce source like water, it also has been contested for a long time. But the ways and especially the motives how and why land was competed over have changed. While people struggled in the past to gain access to specific pastures and grazing areas, competition focuses today basically on demarcated parcels of cultivation land (although struggles for grazing land

---

<sup>93</sup> Galaty, "Maasai Expansion & the New African Pastoralism", p. 61-87.

Spear, "Being 'Maasai', but not 'People of Cattle': Arusha Agricultural Maasai in the Nineteenth Century", p. 120-137.

<sup>94</sup> King, *Livestock Water Needs in Pastoral Africa in Relation to Climate and Forage*, p. 69.

<sup>95</sup> Interview, Josua, Young Maasai Warrior, Kibaya, 18.10.2010.

<sup>96</sup> Lee, "Kung Spatial Organization: An Ecological and Historical Perspective", p. 134.

still exist). This is caused by the changing perceptions of people. Because the majority of Kiteto's traditional inhabitants did not cultivate until about twenty years ago, rivalries for cultivation land were limited. Meanwhile, the meaning of ground has changed, and therefore also the modes of competition shifted.

In contrast to most current land contentions, the rivalry for pastures has not been fought out in distinct courts, but via raiding of people's livestock. According to John Berntsen, the hidden motive of livestock-raiding is not to increase people's number of animals, but to gain the control of a distinct grazing area.<sup>97</sup> By stealing from direct rivals, herders do not only increase their own property, but also ensure to get an easier access to the resources of a particular region. The custom of raiding livestock was established in most pastoral societies throughout East African.<sup>98</sup> While some societies actually stopped this custom, other herders maintained it. In Kiteto, livestock-raiding has survived until today, although it decreased rapidly during the past few years. This might be caused by the changing meaning of pastoralism per se, and by the fact that current laws forbid the tradition.

In contrast to pastoral herders, Kiteto's traditional hunter-gatherers usually were not involved in land-rivalries. As they lived originally close to mountain and forest areas, and did not breed animals, they were no serious competitors for pastoralists. Most areas that currently host traditional foragers were originally avoided by “foreigners”<sup>99</sup>, who feared their magic powers or were disgusted by their “backward” way of life. Therefore, the current contention for land is a relatively new experience for most of them. But how and why did they become involved in current resource-competition?

### *3.2.2 Improvements in Infrastructure, Population Growth and Immigration*

The improvement of infrastructure is actually one important factor for increasing resource competition in Kiteto. Hence, the general number of people that live in the District grew amongst others, because developing infrastructure had a big influence on people's healthcare, and because the betterment of infrastructure attracted many “foreigners” to immigrate. So it is known for example that the mortality rate of adults and children decreased due to the establishment of hospitals and pharmacies throughout the District. According to an UNICEF-Report from 2007 the death-rate amongst children in Tanzania decreased about 24% within

---

<sup>97</sup> Berntsen, “Untitled Review “, p. 196.

<sup>98</sup> Herskovits, “The Cattle Complex in East Africa“, p. 230-272.

<sup>99</sup> By foreigners I generally mean Tanzanian cultivators who are not born in Kiteto and immigrated for distinct reasons.

the last fifteen years.<sup>100</sup> Also the construction of streets and artificial water-wells enhanced to people's improving living situation. Most places are currently well connected and therefore offer a relatively good exchange between rural and urban spaces. The improvement of infrastructure and distinct regional policies also contributed to people's changing perceptions of subsistence. Most of Kiteto's current population either started cultivating crops or began to focus on an agro-pastoral livelihood (like the examples of the District's traditional foragers indicate).

An example that proves the importance of improving infrastructure for people's healthcare is the story of Thomas Kimbey, whom I met in Napilo Konya. While sitting in the shadow of a big acacia tree Thomas reported how the relatively new street from Kijungu to Kibaya once saved his life. Hence, he told me how he and his friend went into the bush to hunt, about seven years ago. While searching for prey, they were suddenly attacked by a big male lion. The lion wounded Thomas badly (which I could see by his impressive scars), before his friend was able to react and to kill it. In order to save Thomas life his companion had to transport him to the nearest hospital. As the first town was far away, his friend carried him to a paved road, which had been built just a few years before. When the two hunters reached the road luckily a lorry passed by. Thomas's friend stopped the vehicle and convinced the driver to bring them to Kibaya hospital.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to the improvement of roads, the increasing establishment of artificial water-wells contributed to the betterment of people's healthcare. While especially in the past many people suffered and died by a lack of water, the general supply situation of the District has improved lately. I observed many artificial wells and ground-water-pumps throughout the entire District (and especially within urban areas and bigger villages). According to the regional development officer Joseph Maleba, the reliability of water provision has been one of the most important achievements of modern regional development policies.<sup>102</sup> However, the current situation is still far from being good, and I still met many people during my stay that did not have a regular water supply.

Next to the generally improving infrastructure and the betterment of the regional healthcare-system, most of Kiteto's indigenous population began recently to change their traditional way of subsistence. It is known that almost all traditional herders and foragers have stable homesteads and cultivate fields (basically maize). This change of subsistence is due to

---

<sup>100</sup> UNICEF, Special Paper: Children and Vulnerability in Tanzania, 2007, p. 9.  
[www.repoa.or.tz/documents\\_storage/Special%20Paper%20%2007.25.pdf](http://www.repoa.or.tz/documents_storage/Special%20Paper%20%2007.25.pdf) (15.08.2011).

<sup>101</sup> Interview, Thomas Kimbey, Napilo Konya, 11.11.2010

<sup>102</sup> Interview, Joseph Maleba, District Development Officer, Kiabaya, 04.11.2010

the implementation of particular policies and programs urging nomads to adapt, while on the other hand especially many young people increasingly succumbed to the temptations of “modernity” and monetary consumption.

By talking to several politicians and members of development organizations, I experienced that regular programs and workshops were implemented to convince nomadic herders and hunters about the advantages of sedentarism. Especially Kiteto's regional politicians stated that one of their major development goals was to settle down nomadic people. Joseph Maleba argued for example, that settling nomadic people would be important to educate and develop them, in the sense of education.<sup>103</sup> This statement correlates with an assertion of Tanzania's current President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, who said in his speech to the National Parliament in 2005:

“We will deliberate measures to improve the livestock sector. Our people must change from being nomadic cattle herders to being modern livestock keepers. We will take measures to improve pastures, veterinary care, cattle dips, and auctions...”<sup>104</sup>

Although some of Kiteto's traditional nomads started to change their way of life because they were taught so, the majority of them transformed for different reasons. By talking to a young Maasai pastoralist who invited me to his *kraal* (homestead), I experienced that his motivation for cultivating crops was mainly economically triggered. He told me that his major ground for starting to cultivate maize was to satisfy his material needs. When I confusedly shook my head, he explained me that selling parts of his harvest would allow him to buy little stuff (like clothes, a cell-phone, beer etc.), which he could not have done before because he didn't sell his livestock. However, this fact did not mean that he stopped herding. On the contrary, he elaborated that breeding animals would be still important, because it would increase his social status, and would also allow him to marry. Hence, giving up breeding cattle and just focusing on farming would not be an alternative for him.

Improving infrastructure and economic change did not only contribute to a general population growth (because mortality decreased), but also contributed to emerging resource competition in distinct areas. As people began to cultivate fields, they searched for the best spots to do so. Thus, areas that generally possessed better natural and infrastructural conditions (spaces close to towns and roads that possess better soils, or have better water to access) became occupied first. Especially the open plains between Kibaya Town and the

---

<sup>103</sup> Interview, Joseph Maleba, District Development Officer, Kiabaya, 04.11.2010.

<sup>104</sup> Kikwete, *Speech by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete on Inaugurating the Fourth Phase Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania*, Dodoma, 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2005, <http://www.parliament.go.tz/bunge/president.php> (12.08.2011).

southern border of the district (which experienced generally more annual rain), were rapidly accessed by cultivators, and during my stay I observed only few spots in this region that were not cultivated yet. People told me that transforming wild savanna bush land into fields had become an everyday practice, and that only a few of the best spaces had not been occupied yet.

The little remaining spots of proper cultivation land, the general scarcity of water, and the disappearance of traditional pastures caused increasing conflicts recently. I experienced for example several situations in which cultivators competed with each other or with neighbouring pastoralists for the same water wells. Usually people were debating peacefully, but I also heard stories of violent incidents. As noted most cultivators also possessed animals themselves, and most pastoralists had fields somewhere else. Nevertheless people constantly tried to push their personal claims for water-wells, fields, and pastures.

Especially within the southern areas of the district additional competition for shrinking pristine bush land increased lately, whereas the more arid regions of the north-east experienced struggles over decreasing pastures. As most land in the south became recently cultivated, many people sent their herds to the north of Kiteto, to find some places to feed them. This again has led to an overgrazing of pastures in some areas, and therefore struggles for the access to grass broke out. Furthermore, the pastoralists of the North began to compete with each other. This did not happen frequently in the past, because the density of people and animals was generally lower and the water supply sufficient.

Another factor to be considered when talking about resource competition is the strong recent immigration of agro-pastoralists into the District. The improvement of infrastructure attracted cultivating “foreigners” to move to Kiteto, and therefore contributed to population growth. The District's actual Development Officer, explained me that especially during the past two decades the annual rate of migrants coming in was about 4% of the District's current population.<sup>105</sup> This led to Kiteto's rapid population growth of about 5.1 %. According to my data the majority of them arrived from surrounding Districts (like Kondoa and Dodoma), although I also met people from other parts of the country. When I asked some farmers from Kondoa about their motives of moving to Kiteto, they told me that they came basically for two reasons: because of the generally easy availability of free pristine land and secondly because of the difficult land situation within their own home areas. They explained e.g. that the land situation in Kondoa was problematic, because the best soils were already occupied and therefore good cultivation ground was hard to find. They added that particularly young

---

<sup>105</sup> Interview, District Development Officer Joseph Maleba, Kiabaya, 04.11.2010.

men from big families, would not inherit enough land to bring up their own family, and consequently would be forced to leave their homelands in order to find their own space. Hence, Kiteto's free available spaces appeared tempting for them.<sup>106</sup>

Another migrant from the Kilimanjaro area approved to this statement and added that Kiteto's generally fertile soils and improving infrastructure made the District interesting for any cultivators. They told me that the recent construction of roads and new markets attracted him to move to Kiteto. He explained to me that in the past many people did not want to move into the interior of the Maasai steppe, because it was barely tapped and underdeveloped. However, as things were changing during the last decades, many people were lured to move to it.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to the immigration of individuals and families, also many private investors and even some companies moved to Kiteto. This was caused by national and regional policies, which advertised the District as one of Tanzania's future “breadbaskets”. According to District's Development Officer Joseph Maleba, Kiteto's closeness to the biggest economic centres on the coast is responsible for this development.<sup>108</sup> The change of Kiteto from a basically pastoral habitat into an agrarian environment can be further demonstrated by pure facts. The district is currently covered by more than 380,000 hectares of farming land, which is about 22,8 % of its total size (1,668,500 hectares). Considering that only twenty years ago, more than 90% of the District was covered by pastures (today about 66 %) and forests, this is a remarkable change.<sup>109</sup>

### *3.3 The Implementation and Execution of Tanzanian Land Law*

Another important factor that has to be considered when elaborating on environmental change and the rise of resource-competition in Kiteto is the implementation and application of Tanzanian land-law. As this section is going to show, the application of law actually contributes to emerging problems rather than de-escalating the situation. However, like in the case of many other African states, current Tanzanian land-law was influenced and shaped by different historic epochs and experienced several minor and major changes. This section first gives a brief historical survey of Tanzanian land law development, before introducing to its current implementation and application within Kiteto.

---

<sup>106</sup> Group Interview, Halifa und Saidi, Farmers from Kondoa, Napilo Konya, 19.11.2010.

<sup>107</sup> Interview, Sef, Farmer from Kilimanjaro, Kibaya, 04.01.2011.

<sup>108</sup> Interview, District Development Officer Joseph Maleba, Kiabaya, 04.11.2010.

<sup>109</sup> Maghimbi, “Water, Nomadism and the Subsistence Ethic in Maasailand (Kiteto District)“, p. 64.

The first people who implemented a specific land law valid for the entire mainland of current Tanzania were the German colonizers in 1895. According to their policy all land was declared to be property of the German crown (with the exception of some areas already occupied by private European settlers). The German governor of Tanganyika became the administrator of all land and was free to distribute it on behalf of the crown. In some cases this led to so-called “land-alienations”: the dispossession and displacement of Africans from their customary homelands. While land-alienations became a common practice in the fertile highlands of the Usambara Mountains and in the Kilimanjaro Region, the savannas of Maasailand (and therefore its inhabitants) were widely unaffected by it. As Eric Boos states:

“[Tanzanian] Maasailand was largely unaffected [by German land-alienations], however, because no white settlers wanted to live there. The hot, dry climate and unfavourable agricultural environment of the savanna made it unattractive to Europeans. As a result, the effects of German land-law were minimal for the Maasai.”<sup>110</sup>

When the British took over Tanganyika after World War II, colonial land-law changed slightly. According to the Land Ordinance of 1923 the British perceived land as communal property and declared that all public land belonged to the crown. Only land that was owned by people who possessed a so-called “granted freehold title” was excluded from this law. In order to modernize their own land-law, the British invented in 1928 a specific clause that granted people’s “deemed right of occupancy”. The clause was meant to equate the customary land claims of Africans to the granted land rights of settlers, who already possessed a certificate. However, the law was only poorly applied in practice and most Africans never received any document that guaranteed or secured their distinct land-rights. For the inhabitants of Maasailand the minor changes concerning British colonial land-laws and distinct land-policies did not play an important role, because the colonizers had only little interest in the area.<sup>111</sup>

After Tanzania’s independence in 1961 the administration of the country was handed to the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and its chair Julius Nyerere. The new president, who had strongly opposed colonial land-alienations, emphasized the rights of Tanzanians to gain access to their customary land. However, as other parts of his political program focused on social integration and the strengthening of the agrarian sector, he did not return any land to particular groups. On the contrary, Nyerere emphasized that land belonged primarily to the Tanzanian state, and after a few years of his mandate he implemented his

---

<sup>110</sup> Boos, “Property Rights, Pastoral People and Problems with Privatization in Tanzania”, p. 51.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 53-56.

famous policies of villagization, which aimed to concentrate the entire Tanzanian population in distinct state-villages, to strengthen the national economy and to simultaneously “develop” the country. Due to the villagization-policies many people became replaced from their customary homelands and were forced to settle in newly established villages.<sup>112</sup> According to Eric Boos, Nyerere’s land policies can be summed up in seven different principles:

1. All land belongs to the state.
2. There are dual ownership rights granted by the state for up to 99 years.
3. Land rights and titles are based on use.
4. Commoditization and speculation in land are proscribed; transfer from land from natives to non-natives is virtually forbidden (including companies).
5. Uncultivated land (and most common properties) remains public land under the direct management of the government and its representatives at lower levels of administration including District and Village Councils.
6. Women have inferior land rights.
7. Interventionist and paternalistic land tenure matters.<sup>113</sup>

As stated previously, Nyerere’s land-politics also affected the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies of Kiteto. Also pastoralists and hunter-gatherers were forced to move and live in state-villages. This had a huge impact on the face of the region, because big parts of Maasailand became almost de-populated, and many people were bundled in settlements that were far away from their traditional homes. However, a quit remarkable number of traditional foragers and herders left the state villages after a few years and returned to their customary homelands. As only few state villages had been established in Kiteto, the return of people went rather smooth (unlike in other Tanzanian areas, where people met newcomers on their customary land that had been brought to the area because of Nyerere’s villagization-politics).<sup>114</sup>

With the end of socialism in 1992 Tanzania started to reform its land-politics again. After some years of reorientation the government finally presented the Land Act of 1999 and the Village Land Act of 1999, which are valid until today.<sup>115</sup> The implementation of the two

---

<sup>112</sup> Schneider, “Freedom and Unfreedom in Rural Development: Julius Nyerere, *Ujamaa Vijijini* and Villagization”, p. 345.

<sup>113</sup> Boos, “Property Rights, Pastoral People and Problems with Privatization in Tanzania”, p. 67.

<sup>114</sup> Sundet, “The Politics of Land Tenure in Tanzania: The Modernizing State vs Smallholder Farmers”, p. 62.

<sup>115</sup> United Republic of Tanzania (URT), Website: Land, <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/lands.html> (22.11.2011).

acts was meant to modernize Tanzanian land policies, and was part of a national decentralization and liberalization program. The new land law was defining three different forms of land: 1) Reserved Land (including some forests, distinct game-reserves, and all National Parks administered by a specific national ministry). 2) Village Land (demarcated land that belonged to specific villages, and therefore to be administered by distinct village-councils). 3) Public-Land (areas that do not belong to villages or reserved areas, and to be administered by the National Land Management).

The basic idea behind the implementation of the new Land Acts was to decentralize land-management to the regions, and to strengthen the position of regional District- and Village Councils (which had been first implemented by Nyerere in 1975). These councils are elected legal bodies that execute distinct forms of law on behalf of the Tanzanian state. Village Councils consist of 25 members, who are elected every five years by a Village Assembly (which consists of all villagers older than 18 years), and are headed by a chairman and his secretary (who again are elected by a distinct council). The councils are subordinated to so-called Ward Councils (which consist of all village-chairmen and some state-officials sent to the area), which again are subordinated to District Councils. According to Liz Alden Wiley<sup>116</sup>, District Councils consist of a number of regional politicians (who are again elected by the distinct village-councils) and several state-officials. She states that District governments are fully autonomous to the central government in legal terms, and that they raise their own revenues through taxes.

In order to successfully implement Tanzania's new land-politics some parts of the country were split and became subdivided into new administrative sections. As it has been stated in the first chapter, Kiteto was also affected by this re-organization. The District belonged originally to the region of Arusha before it was divided in 2002, and the region of Manyara was founded. When I visited Kiteto, all administrative procedures (like the verification of local research permissions) were conducted in Babati (which is the capital of Manyara Region). In addition to the decentralization of land management and the re-definition of land the national state-government liberalized land for private investors (which included both Tanzanians and international entrepreneurs). It allowed individuals and companies to lease land for the duration of 99 years. According to Arrigo Pallotti<sup>117</sup>, the basic idea behind this concept was to strengthen regional markets and to reduce regional poverty. He states:

---

<sup>116</sup> Wiley, *Community-Based Land Tenure Management: Questions and Answers about Tanzania's New Village Land Act, 1999*, p. 4-6.

<sup>117</sup> Pallotti, "Tanzania: Decentralizing Power or Spreading Poverty?", p. 222.

“Both Tanzania’s PRSP [Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper] and NSGRP [National Strategy Paper for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty] place a strong emphasis on the restructuring on local political and economic institutions; they both also consider decentralization and the formalisation of individual land rights as the key to economic growth and poverty reduction.”<sup>118</sup>

However, Pallotti also argues that the original plan of strengthening local administrations and liberalizing land, frequently did not lead to a fair distribution. On the contrary, some chairmen and other members of distinct village councils started to abuse their powerful status and began to distribute land in their own interest (they sold it to the best paying party). According to him this development has led to an increasing exclusion of minority groups, because most members of these groups are neither represented within a particular village-council (and therefore lack political support) nor wealthy enough to bribe local politicians.<sup>119</sup>

According to the regional land-office in Kibaya the District of Kiteto is currently divided into 15 different Wards and 58 accredited villages. Due to strong population growth the number of villages has increased rapidly during the past twenty years, and so one of the essential challenges of Kiteto’s land-office is to register the quickly emerging settlements. Because only accredited villages gain the legal right to administer their own village-issues, many hamlets and settlements recently filed an application for official acknowledgement. By talking to land-officer Simon Makundo I learned that the District hosts many unregistered villages that are waiting for accreditation. Most of these settlements possess the official status of so-called sub-villages, which means that they form their own village governments that are subordinated to the administration of neighbouring officially accredited settlements.<sup>120</sup>

My informant told me that one of the biggest problems Kiteto currently faces is the demarcation of village land. Hence, only the borders of ten accredited villages have been demarcated yet (which means that 48 remaining settlements and of course all unregistered hamlets do not possess clear village-borders). As people are constantly migrating to Kiteto and continually occupying “pristine” (which means uncultivated) areas the absence of borders is increasingly turning into a problem. It has happened that different village councils permitted distinct individuals to settle at the same spot, or that land which did not belong to a village was sold by a village-council to a specific investor. Furthermore Simon Makundo told me of cases where people even did not ask for the permission to settle and cultivate land, and just occupied spots which they then defended by private force. However, the arbitrary

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 222.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 228-229.

<sup>120</sup> Interview: Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

occupation of land has not only caused problems among settlers themselves. It also led to tensions between farmers and pastoralists, who have been increasingly facing problems to find proper pastures for their livestock. When I asked the land-officer how the regional District Government reacts to these conditions in Kiteto Makundo told me that the administration just would not react. He stated that the District Government did not possess enough capital to examine all distinct cases.<sup>121</sup>

Although Kiteto's current land situation is generally problematic my informant in the land office noted, that wealthy people and settlers that are befriended with local politicians (like village chairmen), are usually advantaged to accomplish their claims. He confirmed that some chairmen are actually selling farmland to the highest-bidding person and that relatives of local politicians do not face difficulties to receive proper cultivation land. When I asked him which possibilities people that feel excluded or misunderstood from land-distribution possess, he responded: none. He stated that the District Government would be "too busy" to engage with all the cases and that it was clearly anchored in the Village Land Act that every village-council supposedly administers its own land-issues. Simon Makundo added that ethnic belonging would play an important role in the courts. He told me that many Akie were not treated fair in court because the magistrates (who are in fact the chairmen of villages) did not believe them from the very beginning (because of their stigmatized heritage), or because they were not able to pay enough money to get a fair trial.<sup>122</sup>

Although current Tanzanian land-law aims to secure people's land-rights and intends to guarantee an equal distribution of land, its execution frequently leads to the opposite. As this chapter has proven particularly marginalized people who are economically weak are in fact excluded from land distribution and therefore are systematically disadvantaged to compete for resources. The following chapter will back up this assertion and highlight how the Akie deal with their marginalized status, and how they are negotiating their ethnic identity to position themselves within a transforming environment and to realize their basic rights.

---

<sup>121</sup> Interview: Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

<sup>122</sup> Interview, Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

## Chapter 4

### **Akie Responses to a Changing Social and Natural Environment**

The recent changes within Kiteto's social and natural environment and the rise of resource competition have had a big impact on the District's traditional foraging groups. As the number of sedentary people and the need for water and cultivation-land increased during the past twenty years, regions that had been avoided by settlers in the past also became targeted. The customary homelands of Kiteto's traditional foragers (i.e., Namelok, Loolera, Napilo Konya and Ngapapa) were such avoided areas. According to the former chairman of Napilo Konya, Olesanetiy, the relative isolation of Akie territories was mainly caused by two facts: a) "foreign settlers" did not need to penetrate the homelands of traditional hunter-gatherers because surrounding areas provided enough available space and equally good soils and pastures, and b) many people did not want to live too close to "backward" hunter-gatherers, who were feared to possess magic powers.<sup>123</sup> In addition, it has to be considered that a sedentary lifestyle is in general a rather recent phenomenon in Kiteto. As discussed in the previous chapters, most Akie inhabitants originally lived in nomadic or semi-nomadic manner and therefore were able to avoid each other relatively easily.

However, with the rising demand for water and land also the customary Akie territories were increasingly penetrated by resident pastoralists and immigrating settlers. The first Akie areas targeted by immigrating settlers were the regions of Namelok and Loolera. As both spots are closely located to one of the big highways of the District they were relatively easy to access and allowed migrants to import seeds and machines and to export their harvest. While both areas were almost exclusively inhabited by semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers until the early 1990s, they are nowadays prospering villages filled with with a multicultural population.

According to my informants, most Akie who lived originally in Namelok or Loolera left the areas in order to find shelter in the more remote villages of Napilo Konya and Ngapapa,

---

<sup>123</sup> By talking to some young Maasai-pastoralists in Kibaya Town I experienced, that many people in the District believe that the Akie use witchery to bring down big game, and to produce arrow poison. The youngsters explained me that arrow-poison could be only produced by a person, who possesses a connection to the spiritual world.

which became penetrated later by “foreign intruders”. However, I also heard stories of successful Akie who stayed in Namelok and Loolera and managed to become wealthy and distinguished village members. Nevertheless, none of them succeeded in getting elected to the village-council and I experienced that most of them deny their foraging background and heritage publicly in order to avoid the resentment of their neighbors.

In Napilo Konya and Ngapapa, things developed differently compared to Loolera and Namelok. As both locations were largely inhabited by traditional hunter-gatherers until recent times, and because their number steadily increased during the past few years, both villages host nowadays a remarkably high Akie population. This has had a great impact on the shape of the settlements and on the self-perception of the people. The Akie who live in these villages started to form a united front in order to preserve their numerical and political predominance and to not lose resources to the immigrating settlers. Their struggle for local self-determination and influence has been supported by several NGOs and private investors, who encouraged the Akie to maintain their distinct cultural identity in order to claim their customary rights (see chapter 5).

This chapter engages particularly with the reaction of Kiteto's traditional foragers to the changing social and natural environment of the District and increasing resource-competition. While first part highlights Akie distinct strategies to resist their marginalized status and to react to the changes within their immediate surroundings, the second part focuses particularly on the two most important Akie-settlements of Napilo Konya and Ngapapa. Whereas Ngapapa already managed to receive its political and social self-determination by becoming a stately accredited village, Napilo Konya still struggles to gain its “independence”.

By discussing the contradictory success of the two settlements to preserve Akie self-determination, both cases exemplify the difficult situation Kiteto's traditional foragers currently face. As the chapter depicts individual cases and analyzes people's motivations and strategies to secure their livelihood, it gives an insight into the complexity of people's actions and therefore contextualizes the economics of identity.

#### *4.1 Akie Strategies to Face Increasing Marginalization and Resource-Competition*

Like many other foraging groups the Akie are frequently stigmatized by their neighbors as “wild” and “uncivilized”.<sup>124</sup> They developed different strategies to protect themselves from such resentment and hostilities by “others”. In the past the easiest way for foragers to avoid the antipathy of their neighbors was to avoid them. The contact between the Akie and their neighbors was usually restricted to distinct cultural events (like common weddings and rituals) and some trading contexts (like the monthly markets). However, as Kiteto’s traditional inhabitants increasingly started to sedentarize and to cultivate crops, and because farmers and agro-pastoralists continued to move into Akie territories, it became more difficult for the Akie to avoid other people. Combined with the generally growing competition for renewable resources, the growth of inter-cultural contacts led to a surge of resentment against Kiteto’s traditional foragers, and therefore partly contributed to growing marginalization. The Akie reacted to this development in different ways. Whereas some abandoned their distinct cultural heritage and took on new identities, others maintained their foraging traditions and pleaded for help with NGOs and other international donors.

Especially Akie who originally lived in areas that were strongly affected by immigration and resource competition (like Loolera and Namelok), reacted to increasing marginalization by assimilating to their neighbors and denying their own cultural heritage publicly. This strategy has been also used by other marginalized minorities, like the San or the Twa, who frequently also assimilated to adjoining groups by taking over distinct identities to secure themselves from resentments and hostilities.<sup>125</sup>

In the case of the Akie, most people who decided to abandon their cultural heritage took on Maasai identity. According to my data the Akie preferred Maasai identity because they were able to imitate them easily. While some Akie used these identities to “impersonate” themselves as Maasai, others just “borrowed” them situationally for a specific occasion. When I went to Namelok, I met an Akie who told me that he had transformed into a Maasai pastoralist some years ago, because it was advantageous for him. The man explained that most people in his immediate surroundings assumed him to be a Maasai because of his pastoral lifestyle. He stated that he once gained some wealth by hunting elephants, selling the ivory and investing the money in livestock and land. When he started to live like a herder, many people automatically assumed he would be a Maasai, and only some of his friends and

---

<sup>124</sup> Compare Woodburn, “Indigenous Discrimination: The Ideological Basis for Local Discrimination against Hunter-Gatherer Minorities in Sub-Sahara Africa“, p. 345-361.

<sup>125</sup> Jolly, “Symbiotic Between Black Farmers and South-Eastern San“, p. 279.

relatives knew about his true heritage. The man told me that being a Maasai in public usually was beneficial for him and that he never admitted his foraging past publicly after changing his life. When I asked him about the advantages of his new identity he said that a Maasai lives an easier life than an Akie, because most herders do not experience discrimination. He reported that he didn't face any problems to receive proper cultivation land like many other Akie and that he experienced lots of respect from his non-native neighbors. Furthermore, he added that he did not struggle to find several wives, like many other Akie men. From some other traditional foragers in Napilo Konya I learned additionally that the elder was still a respected person within his "traditional community", because he never forgot "his people" and supported supplicants generously.

However, the majority of people I met just borrowed a Maasai-identity for specific occasions and used this behavior systematically. When for example I accompanied some of my informants from Napilo Konya to the market of Kibaya, they asked me not to identify them as Akie. They told me that only few people could identify them as traditional foragers anyway, and that people would give them fairer prices and more respect if they would assume them to be Maasai. This statement was affirmed by Officer Simon Makundo from the local Land Office, who added that being Akie would be politically disadvantageous. He stated that people with a foraging background would experience more difficulties to get nominated for political positions. Makundo argued that Akie being generally seen as uneducated and poor (which in fact is frequently true), would make them in the eyes of many people unsuitable for public posts. Furthermore, he stated that Akie stigma and their usually weak economic status disadvantage them to find justice in court. He told me also that many Akie simply were not treated fair in court because the magistrates did not believe them from the very beginning (because of their heritage) or because they were not able to pay enough money for a fair legal procedure.<sup>126</sup>

The denial of cultural heritage can be perceived as a survival strategy, which most Akie use mainly outside of their customary homelands. Especially within their two customary territories of Napilo Konya and Ngapapa, most traditional hunter-gatherers are currently highlighting their foraging heritage. This is stimulated by the influence of external agents (like NGOs and private investors) who encourage the Akie to accentuate their particular cultural heritage in order to maintain their indigenous status. By teaching them to claim their distinct indigenous position, external stakeholders hope to strengthen the Akie's weak

---

<sup>126</sup> Interview, Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

political and socioeconomic status, and to better their current living conditions (to be explained in the chapter 5).

As the Akie are actually recognized by the United Nations as an indigenous-ethnic-group, several of such external “benefactors” are subsidizing them. However, a fundamental “problem” that these NGOs and private donors currently face is that the Akie are not a “united or ethnic-group”. Therefore it is difficult to define them as an “indigenous entity”. As explained in the previous chapters, marriages between traditional foragers and herders or farmers have existed for a long time, and in times of sorrow people frequently changed their modes of subsistence and assimilated to neighboring societies. So the basic problem that occurs is to identify who can claim to be indigenous and who cannot. Adam Kuper denotes this question as the fundamental problem of the indigeneity-debate in general, because he sees the concept of indigenous identity as a misleading “primordialist” myth.<sup>127</sup>

In the case of Kiteto's traditional foragers, further difficulties appear. As pastoral Maa-speakers who have been in exchange with hunter-gatherers for centuries are considered to be indigenous too, it appears to be difficult for NGOs and other benefactors to decide who to support on the basis of indigeneity and who not. This question is exacerbated by the fact that pastoral Maa-speakers and traditional hunter-gatherers now compete for the same resources, and therefore aid agencies have to decide where to position themselves. Furthermore, the Tanzanian state doesn't yet recognize the UN's proposal of acknowledging and supporting indigenous peoples. Like most other African states, the central government of Tanzania legally opposes the differentiation between distinct ethnic-groups. To this respect NGOs and private donors started to refer to the current Tanzanian Land Law, which among others grants people the right of first occupancy. By arguing that some indigenous peoples are also the “autochthonous” population of particular areas, NGOs intended to circumnavigate the question of indigeneity and to support their target groups anyway. However, the question of autochthony may be just another delusive inquiry, because it assumes again that people live in closed ethnic groups that are easy to identify. Furthermore, an identification of distinct autochthonous groups may purposefully exclude parts of currently existing societies from particular geographical spaces.<sup>128</sup>

For the specific case of Kiteto, an identification of the autochthonous population is therefore difficult for two reasons: first the history of the region is largely unknown so that nobody knows definitely who lived where first: and secondly, between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Kuper, “The Return of the Native“, p. 389-395.

<sup>128</sup> Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, “Capitalism and Autochthony: The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging“, p. 423-453.

century the entire area was no doubt mainly inhabited by nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples, who didn't claim particular demarcated spaces. Hence, it is difficult to attach an area to a person, and therefore both national and local administrations hesitate to acknowledge the nomads' legal rights of first occupancy. Land Officer Simon Makundo stated that nobody who lives Kiteto has been yet successful to claim his/her right of first occupancy, and that he personally does not believe that this might change soon.<sup>129</sup>

However, Kiteto's traditional foragers are specifically threatened by increasing resource competition. Their generally small number, their weak economic status, and their absence within most regional political institutions (like village governments), make them very vulnerable to contentions about resources. Although the Akie were originally indeed the indigenous population within distinct areas of Kiteto, they have recently been outnumbered in most locations, and therefore just form a tiny and frequently overlooked minority within the District. Even within some of their customary "core areas", the Akie are actually under threat of losing access to land and water, and with the exceptions of Ngapapa and Napilo Konya, they have become minorities within their own traditional settlements. As said the Akie are not represented in most local village governments, and therefore they are widely excluded from fair resource distribution.

Below, I will focus more specifically on the current situation of Kiteto's traditional foragers and discuss how they experience and manage forms of resource competition. By analyzing their struggle for assets, I aim to illustrate how the economics of identity work in the case of the Akie, and which strategies Kiteto's foragers developed to secure their threatened livelihoods.

The rest of the chapter is subdivided into two parts. The first part focuses on the village of Napilo Konya, which is the biggest Akie-settlement in Kiteto, and which exemplifies the problems and difficulties most traditional foragers are actually struggling with. By presenting the cases of Thomas Kimbey and his neighbor Peter Olekano I wish to depict how serious the situation for most people actually is, and how disadvantageous it might seem to be an Akie. This assertion will then be contrasted with a case study in the second part of the chapter which focuses on the village of Ngapapa. The story of this settlement which hosts the second biggest assembly of traditional hunter-gatherers within the District proves that under certain conditions the status of being Akie can even be advantageous as to resource competition. This has to be understood as a counter-example to Napilo Konya.

---

<sup>129</sup> Interview, Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

## 4.2 Napilo Konya

The region that surrounds the mountain of Napilo Konya is one of the last areas in Tanzania that hosts a good number of traditional Akie hunter-gatherers.<sup>130</sup> Whereas people in the past were living scattered all over the territory, they recently formed a stable settlement which tries to get stately accreditation. According to the village census of 17 June 2010,<sup>131</sup> the settlement hosted 102 self-described Akie adults and about 50 children. The number of traditional foragers who live within the village borders has increased lately, because Akie from all over Kiteto (and even neighboring Districts) have moved to Napilo Konya recently in order to find a stable place to settle. According to my interpretation and the descriptions of the previous chapters the basic reason why so many Akie were moving into the shelter of the village was the emergence of acute resource competition, which threatened their livelihoods. But even the centralization of people in did not prevent them from the threat of resource competition. Like in most other parts of the District, the Akie of Napilo Konya are currently also involved in resource struggles, and many of them are threatened again to lose access to customary lands. In fact, the situation of the village even worsened within the last ten years, when pastoralists and cultivators came and started to settle down within the village borders. In the particular case of Napilo Konya, migrants were especially attracted by the region's fertile soils and its closeness to the regional capital of Kibaya (about 25 kilometers away).

The area that surrounds the mountain of Napilo Konya has been the living environment of distinct Akie populations since centuries. In the past, the region was largely covered by dense savanna bush land and Miombo Woodland<sup>132</sup> teeming with game, and therefore was the perfect habitat for foragers. However, this has changed. Due to the increasing immigration of pastoralists and cultivators, lots of traditional bush land has been cleared recently. While traveling throughout the area I observed many new fields, and even bigger areas of burned savanna bush land to be cultivated soon. According to my informant Thomas Kimbey most people started to cultivate crops since the late 90s.<sup>133</sup> Whereas farming was in the beginning just an additional activity to hunting and gathering, it soon became the major strategy of food production. Several local NGOs and private donors that started to

---

<sup>130</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2010*, p. 492.

[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0001\\_I\\_\\_2010\\_EB.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0001_I__2010_EB.pdf) (31.11.2011).

<sup>131</sup> The census was arranged by the current chairman of the village, Mbulu Kizota, who visited all members of the village-assembly in order to register them.

<sup>132</sup> *Miombo Woodland* is closed deciduous, non-spinescent woodland that is usually found in geologically old regions with nutrient-poor soils and little rainfall. (See: Campbell, *The Miombo in Transition: Woodlands and Welfare in Africa*, p. 2).

<sup>133</sup> Interview, Thomas Kimbey, Napilo Konya. 11.11.2010.

support people's endeavors of crop cultivation, helping them to sell part of the harvest, providing them with seeds and machines, and teaching them the 'advantages' of making money contributed to this process. In fact, most Akie became quickly convinced by the “blessing” of paper money, because in contrast to the past also neighboring societies had switched their currency and so the exchange of goods (like honey and skins for iron and knives) had become difficult.

The arrival of the nomadic herders who occupied the grazing areas surrounding Napilo Konya also had a big impact on the water supply of the region. Whereas the only small water well of the region was previously used by hunter-gatherers, it was virtually taken over by herders in the late 90s. As crop cultivation was not well developed among the traditional foragers at that time the Akie people just left for the savannas to satisfy their water needs (by gathering distinct water storing plants or catching water from baobab trees). However, with the intensification of agriculture the Akie met a dilemma, because they needed more time to care for their fields and therefore could not move too far and fetch water in the savanna. They went back to the old well and began to claim their rights for water by debating with the pastoralists. From that time on the well was occupied at day and night times, especially during the dry season. Unfortunately the water did not always replenish fast, because the well had to be refilled by ground water, and so the first conflicts emerged. Before serious clashes could occur, the Akie started to send small delegations of two to three men into surrounding villages of Napilo Konya, to ask for better water supply.

As Napilo Konya is not stately accredited yet, it belongs administratively and formally under the guidance of Kimana. However, Kimana Village is about twenty kilometers away, and because its people were at that time struggling with their own problems, their village government did not help the people from Napilo Konya. Another delegation was sent to Kibaya Town in order to directly address an official of the District's Government. Nonetheless, the official sent the men away without having achieved anything, because they “did not follow the official procedure”. Finally the situation was solved by a private American investor, who had been in contact with Kiteto's traditional hunter-gatherers for several decades, and who donated an artificial water-pump. His impact on the Akie of Napilo Konya will be discussed in chapter 5. Due to the establishment of this pump in 2007 the quarrels between competing herders and agro-foragers stopped.

However, in 2009 the artificial pumping system was destroyed by an elephant, and since this time water competition recurred. In order to receive at least some amount of water, people started to dig deep holes next to the destroyed pump to reach ground water. These

holes are between five and eight meter deep, and during my stay I talked to several people who were camping close to them to wait for the ground water to replenish. No efforts to repair the old pump or to receive a new artificial system were successful yet. Some villagers of Napilo Konya contacted a craftsman from Kondoa, who professionally searches for water. The professional explained to me how to search for proper locations and how to identify a place with a high groundwater level. He possessed a manually operated drilling-bit, with which we were digging several probational holes. Unfortunately we did not find water, and after one and a half week of unsuccessful searching, the man capitulated. All attempts to convince him to continue searching failed, because the people did not have enough money to pay him, and he left again for Kondoa.

The demolition of the pump in 2009 occurred at a time when Napilo Konya experienced a strong influx of other traditional hunter-gatherers, foreign cultivators and agro-pastoralists. This process started about five years ago (2005), and according to my informants it has intensified annually. According to the village population census of 2010 Napilo Konya hosted 192 adult people. Considering that 102 of them were identified to be Akie, the number of “foreigners” has increased rapidly. Furthermore, village chairman Kizota Mbulu explained to me that the number of people living within the village borders might be even higher. He stated that he only counted people he knew, which meant people that had asked him for a settling permission.<sup>134</sup> However, as nomadic herders constantly enter and leave village borders and not every intruder asks for a permission to stay, the real number of Napilo Konyas inhabitants is definitely higher than the chairman estimated. The generally growing population and Akie recent change of subsistence has led to an increasing competition for cultivation land.

In the late ‘90s Napilo Konya's traditional foragers decided in cooperation with the local NGO LAMP to apply for statelty village accreditation. Hence, regional foragers started to settle in the plains at the bottom of the southern slopes of the mountain of Napilo Konya. They founded distinct family homesteads relatively close to each other, and began to clear the closest and best spots of the savanna bush land in order to cultivate maize. The basic reason for settling particularly at the southern side of the mountain was the closeness to the only natural water-well (and later also the artificial pumping system), and the short distance to one of Kiteto's big highways (about five kilometers away), which connects Kibaya Town with the coast. The Swedish NGO LAMP (Land Management Program) that worked in Tanzania since 1991 supported Napilo Konyas attempt to become an accredited village. The organization was

---

<sup>134</sup> Interview, Village Chairman Kizota Mbulu, Napilo Konya, 22.10.2010.

very active in Kiteto during the 90s and helped the regional Land Office to register and accredit many villages within the District. According to land officer Simon Makundo, the first registrations of villages throughout Kiteto wouldn't have been possible without the support of the NGO, because the office itself lacked the know-how and the material to measure and demarcate village land.<sup>135</sup> However, Napilo Konya did not succeed to become an accredited village, because no particular settling structure was visible, and people did not live in an ordinary village community. The homesteads of people just were too scattered to convince the Land Office. In fact, the unregistered status of the settlement continues at the moment although another request to check if things have changed is under consideration. According to my data the villagers of Napilo Konya applied for accreditation several times but never succeeded. The only thing the Akie achieved was getting registered as a sub-village of Kimana in '99, and to demarcate the exact village borders of the settlement. Unfortunately I wasn't able to talk to an associate of the LAMP, because the NGO stopped working in Kiteto in early 2010 (i.e., before I started research). As the borders of the sub-village were clear and Kimana possessed its own village land, the chairman of the village authorized the nominated chairman of Napilo Konya to administer the land of the settlement.

The first chairman of Napilo Konya (Olesanetiy) was an old hunter, widely respected by the Akie of the region. He was elected by the small village assembly and headed the village from the mid-90s until 2009, before he was replaced by the current chair Kizota Mbulu (also an Akie). In contradiction to other settlements the guidance of Napilo Konya has been rather egalitarian until today. This is related to Akie traditional social organization, in which power is distributed among several members. Although their society is traditionally less egalitarian than the societies of other foraging groups (because the Akie possess distinct age-groups that define status-differences between younger and older men), they are still relatively classless.<sup>136</sup> For this reason the villagers of Napilo Konya never elected a village council, as legally required, and preferred to discuss and solve problems by convening an assembly of adults and elders. The basic function of Chairman Kizota Mbulu is to register immigrants and to distribute the land of the village. In order to achieve this he keeps a file which notes down how land is distributed, and which areas are still available. Kizota Mbulu told me that all changes of land possession, including new distributions, are registered in this document. He added that all village news is directly communicated with the superior village-

---

<sup>135</sup> Interview, Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

<sup>136</sup> Kaare, "Cosmology, Belonging and Construction of Community Identity: The Politics of Being Hunter-Gatherers among the Akie-Dorobo of Tanzania", p. 29-30.

government of Kimana, which usually does not intervene to make modifications and just accepts it.<sup>137</sup>

However, I was told that especially during the past five years the position of the chairman was increasingly eroded by new migrants. Some “native villagers” told me for example that “newcomers” have been causing problems because they did not ask for permission to stay within the village and just occupied space. As most village land was distributed by the chairman to members of the current village assembly, most places migrants occupied were already “owned” by somebody else. Hence, especially “newcomers” who did not ask the village government to stay and just occupied space have increasingly come into trouble with the “indigenous population” of the area. Many areas that are currently occupied by migrants had not been cultivated yet and therefore appear to be pristine spots. “Newcomers” frequently ignore the fact that this land also is already taken. However, I experienced also cases where migrants took over already demarcated or even cultivated land. In these cases the “newcomers” consciously eroded the position of the “land-owners” and the village government. An example of this is the case of Thomas Kimbey, who was born and raised in Napilo Konya and who lost big areas of land to an immigrating farmer from Kondoa. The “foreign occupant” just settled on one of his best fields and forced him to cede him the land.

#### *4.2.1 Case Study: Thomas Kimbey*

Thomas Kimbey is a traditional hunter-gatherer from Napilo Konya. He does not know his exact age, but he estimates himself at about 40. His mother is an Akie who was born and raised in Napilo Konya, whereas his father was a Chagga-farmer from the Kilimanjaro Region, who died about ten years ago. His father was the first person who started to cultivate in Napilo Konya (in the middle of the 80s). But although the family possessed a small maize field, which Thomas described as *bustani ndogo* (small garden), the kin group sustained livelihood mainly by foraging. By marrying an Akie woman and participating in specific traditional rituals Kimbey became an acknowledged member of Akie society and hence both of his sons (Thomas and Samuel) also became Akie.

Like all registered villagers of Napilo Konya, Thomas received a huge area of land (about 500 acres) from the chairman of the village in 2009. He received the land in a time when the entire village land of Napilo Konya was distributed by Mbulu Kizota to all members

---

<sup>137</sup> Interview, Village Chairman Kizota Mbulu, Napilo Konya, 22.10.2010.

of the village assembly. In the same year he started to demarcate his land (with red colour) and began to clear it. Due to the fact that Thomas lacked mechanic support and assistance in manpower (because machines are difficult to get and his family is very small) the process of clearing the land took a long time and is not finished yet. When I visited him in the end of 2010 he had cleared about 50 acres of savanna on different spots of his land and possessed four different fields. Whereas two of these fields were entirely “new” (which means they were cleared this year), Thomas already cultivated maize on the other two in the preceding year. Because Maasailand generally experiences only one rainy season (from December to March), which people can use to cultivate crops, all fields lie fallow from April to November. In this time the people clear new fields for the next season or remove weeds from their fields.

Although Thomas was demarcating his land with colour and established small temporary huts on each field (to prove its current usage), one of the fields was occupied in June 2010 by two immigrating farmers from Kondoa District. According to Thomas, the two occupants just showed up one day and took over field and hut. As the field is located several kilometres away from the family compound, and because Thomas concurrently cleared a new field in another spot of his land, he did not realize the theft immediately. But a few days after the incident another villager, who happened to pass by the field, informed Thomas that somebody else had occupied his field. Thomas went straight to his field to take to the two occupants to task. When he reached the spot the two “invaders” were busy to clear the fringes of the field from bush land to extend it. They refused Thomas’s appeal to leave his field and search for another place to cultivate. When Thomas insisted, they threatened him with a gun. Hence, Thomas left the “battleground” and went back to the village to discuss the issue with the *mwenyekiti* (chairman) Kizota Mbulu. Whereas Thomas was determined to stay inside his compound the *mwenyekiti* and two elder Akie went to the field to talk to the occupants. After several hours of discussion the delegation returned unsuccessfully. Although the chairman offered both occupants pristine land for cultivation somewhere else the two farmers refused to leave. They argued that Thomas possessed already enough fields to sustain his livelihood whereas they had no cultivation land at all. Furthermore, they indicated that it would take a long time to clear a pristine spot of bush land and as the rainy season was to start soon (at the end of November) they would not have enough time to clear and cultivate a new field, which would have meant to miss a harvest and therefore suffering hunger. Thomas on the other hand argued that he cleared this land by himself, which had taken him one entire year, and that he would depend on the harvest too.

As Napilo Konya has not been accredited as a state village yet, the *mwenyekiti* was powerless to judge the case legally and hence unwilling to call the police. To solve the case peacefully, Thomas and Kizota Mbulu travelled to the village of Kimana (which is the head village of Napilo Konya and already state-acknowledged), to talk to the incumbent chairman. But instead of intervening the chairman of Kimana tried to reassure Thomas and proposed him to clear a new field. He stated that Napilo Konya would possess enough pristine land for everybody, so there would not be any reason to argue about a specific field. So he said no when Thomas insisted to open a legal case to get his land back. The chairman of Kimana also noted that Thomas would not have enough money to pay for a legal procedure. Thomas believes that the chairman of Kimana was only protecting the two occupants because they bribed an important person in the village council or even the chairman himself.

The case of Thomas Kimbey is not unique in Napilo Konya and many people told me similar stories. In contrast to Thomas, other informants refused seeking legal justice and stated to me that they just left the land to the intruders and moved to other spots. They reported that a refusal of relocation could lead to violence, because many foreign settlers arrive in relatively big groups or families to strengthen their position. They explained me that most immigrating occupants possess rifles or other firearms, which they use to make their point. Fortunately I didn't experience such a situation personally.

When I talked to Chairman Kizota Mbulu about the land-thefts of Napilo Konya, I put it to him that especially traditional hunter-gatherers are targeted by "foreign invaders". The *mwenyekiti* explained me that this is basically caused by two reasons: firstly, most of the village land was distributed amongst the registered village-assembly, which consists mainly of traditional foragers. Hence, it is difficult "to not steal" from an Akie. And secondly, most traditional hunter-gatherers do not possess enough material wealth or political support to bring a legal case to the local court. The chairman told me also that many villagers are not even aware of their legal rights, and therefore uncomplainingly accept the numerical and armed superiority of "foreign intruders".<sup>138</sup> Land Officer Simon Makundo confirmed the statement of Napilo Konya's *mwenyekiti* and added that Kiteto does not possess a specific land court anyway. He elaborated that most land-issues are solved within the particular village governments, because the next higher instances (like the Ward and District Courts) only intervene in big lawsuits that are financially profitable.<sup>139</sup> The case of Thomas Kimbey and

---

<sup>138</sup> Interview, Village Chairman Kizota Mbulu, Napilo Konya, 22.10.2010.

<sup>139</sup> Interview, Land Officer Simon Makundo, Kibaya, 05.11.2010.

Mbulu Kizota's explanations indicate that corruption and "lawlessness" might be a common practise in Kiteto.

Not all cases of land-loss in Napilo Konya are entirely inflicted by the new intruders, however. I also talked to villagers who lost land to immigrating farmers whom they had invited purposefully. Thomas Kimbey's neighbour Peter Olekano, for example, gave some acres of agrarian land on loan to a "foreign family" from Kondoa, and finally lost it to them. The lease of land to somebody who cultivates it in the absence of the owner is a common practise in Kiteto. However, normally the person who "borrows" the land leaves it after the first harvest. The story of Peter Olekano will show that this must not be true if an Akie farmer is involved.

#### *4.2.2 Case Study: Peter Olekano*

Peter Olekano is an Akie from Kitwai village in Simanjiro District who moved to Napilo Konya in 2007. He and his wife decided to migrate to Kiteto because they had friends and relatives in Napilo Konya with whom they wanted to stay. When they arrived in the village, Peter contacted the village government and asked for the permission to stay and for land to cultivate. The former *mwenyekiti* Olesanetiy (who headed the village until Kizota Mbulu replaced him in 2009) and the council of elders approved his appeal and gave him about 70 acres, which was noted in the file of the chairman. Peter built a house next to the family compound of Thomas Kimbey and began to clear his land. While his wife gave birth to a boy and a girl, Peter cleared his entire cultivation land and established four different fields. As he worked hard and the maize grew well, he gained a surplus of harvest, which he partly sold on the market of Kibaya.<sup>140</sup>

Before the rainy season of 2009/2010 started, Peter decided to rent 20 acres of cultivation-land to a small family from Kondoa. The practice of loaning land to other people is widespread in Kiteto, because many seasonal workers come to the District every year to work on somebody's fields during the rainy season. Usually these people leave Kiteto when the season is over, but sometimes they also stay and settle down. Peter and the head of the family from Kondoa agreed that after one season the family would have to leave the field, and either move back to their District, or search for another spot to cultivate. As both parties were

---

<sup>140</sup> Every first and fifteenth day of each month a public market is held in Kibaya. Pastoralists and farmers, from all over the District, move to the market to meet friends and to make business. Apart from crops and animals also cloths, tools and trappings are traded. The market is one of the biggest events for Kiteto's inhabitants and everybody who can effort it goes there.

illiterate the contract was sealed orally. Peter considered the rent of his land a win-win situation because he assumed that he would earn some extra money from the deal and still had enough land to secure his own subsistence and generate a small surplus of crops. Furthermore, the deal was beneficial for him, because all four fields could be used and none would lie fallow.<sup>141</sup> Although Chairman Kizota Mbulu knew about the lease of the land he did not note it in his file.

For the family from Kondoa the oral agreement was advantageous too, because Peter did not ask too high fees, and 20 acres of proper cultivation-land appeared to be enough to secure the family's subsistence for one entire year. So the family built two small huts next to the field and started to cultivate at the beginning of the rainy season. When the season was over in April 2010, Peter went to his field to ask for his money and to see off his "employees". However, the family did not want to move. They paid Peter for the season, but refused to leave his land. Their argument was that working on the field had made them its owners, because they alloyed with the earth-spirits of the area. Furthermore, they stated that Peter would still possess enough land to survive, and that he could not have cultivated his entire ground without their help anyway. As Peter didn't succeed to make them leave, he went to the village government of Napilo Konya, to ask the chairman for help. Chairman Kizota Mbulu went to the field and tried to convince the family to move. But they didn't leave, and when I visited Napilo Konya the family had started to extend "their land" by clearing neighbouring spots (without asking for the permission to do so, and without knowing to whom the land legally belonged).

The case of Peter Olekano exemplifies two things: a) it indicates the helplessness of the unaccredited village government to punish law breakers and to implement a respected authority, and b) it demonstrates how some "foreign cultivators" perceive the Akie. The case clearly shows that the traditional foragers of Napilo Konya do not possess enough power to oppose land thefts. Although the Akie know about their land rights and are aware where to complain, and although they possess formal political authority they are de facto powerless against being pushed aside. Immigrating cultivators do not care about the formal authority of traditional hunter-gatherers. They feel superior to their "primitive" neighbours and just undermine their legal rights. According to my experiences the Akie of Napilo Konya usually

---

<sup>141</sup> According to my information 10 acres of cultivation-land are enough to feed a family for one entire year. Anyway people try to cultivate as much as possible to gain a surplus that will bring additional money. As the access to machines is difficult and people are depending on manpower, single families hardly achieve to cultivate more than 30 acres a year (depending on the size of the family and the support of other people). Therefore loaning land that would lay fallow anyway is a welcome source of additional income. Peter couldn't have cultivated all 70 acres entirely by himself.

swallow most forms of disrespect, although they increasingly started to maintain and communicate their legal claims. Due to the support of external actors like NGOs and private donors, whose impact will be discussed in chapter 5, the Akie developed a new self-confidence. However until today the villagers of Napilo Konya lack legal instruments because they did not achieve to receive political accreditation. This is different in the village of Ngapapa which will be discussed in the following section and which is the only place in Tanzania where the Akie possess the legal right for some political self-determination.

### *4.3 Ngapapa*

Ngapapa is an acknowledged state village in Kiteto District. It lies at the bottom of a mountain (also called Ngapapa) in southern Maasailand, about 75 kilometres east of Kibaya (the District's capital) and 100 kilometres west of Handeni. The village hosts approximately 300 people, who live in close distance to each other (unlike many other villages in the region that are quite scattered). Most people that live in Ngapapa are cultivating fields within the borders of the village land but some also breed cattle, chicken, sheep and goats for subsistence. The population of the village consists of different ethnic groups (Akie, Maasai, Gogo and Rangi) that live together peacefully. The majority of inhabitants identify themselves as Akie.<sup>142</sup>

The present shape of the village is relatively recent and until the early 1990s the area surrounding the mountain was covered by savanna bush and pasture. The people that lived there sustained their livelihood mainly by foraging or breeding cattle. Whereas the plains at the bottom of the mountain were traditionally occupied by nomadic Maasai pastoralists, the steep and densely forested slopes were mainly inhabited by semi-nomadic Akie hunter-gatherers. I was told that in the past the region hosted huge numbers of wildlife and beehives, and during a hike to the peak of the mountain I still saw lots of smaller and bigger animals. My informants told me that the area surrounding the mountain has always been inhabited by semi-nomadic people (mainly foragers) because the mountain provides two reliable water wells that allow people to settle. As most pastoralists possess donkeys that are able to carry and transport water, they depend less on a permanent water access point than foragers. According to my informants the Maasai used the wells of Ngapapa traditionally to re-fill their water-bags but returned afterwards back to the plains where they could graze their cattle,

---

<sup>142</sup> According to the village census of July 2010 Ngapapa inhabits 307 adults. 86 of these adults claim to be Akie, which means they followed previously a foraging lifestyle.

whereas the Akie stayed close to the wells and just left the slopes of the mountain to hunt and gather.

The village like it exists today was founded in 1993. Unlike many other settlements in the District that emerged spontaneously (which means people just settle together and form a village) Ngapapa was generated artificially. This was mainly due to the relatively large number of hunter-gatherers in the area and the explicit effort of Benedict Loosurutia, a former Member of Parliament for the District. My informants told me that Loosurutia was a very ambitious politician who wanted to form a specific space for foragers to “develop” and concentrate them. It happened at a time when many villages in Maasailand emerged because the state increased its effort to settle down nomadic and semi-nomadic people in order to “develop” them. In addition, Loosurutia aimed to create a specific space for hunter-gatherers where they could maintain a “distinct space”. As foragers have always been a minority group in Kiteto Loosurutia (by himself a Maasai) feared that without an area they could live in freely, they might disappear completely in the future. Hence, he formed a coalition with two NGOs (KINNAPA and LAMP) and started information campaigns in Ngapapa (which will be explained in chapter 5). They were explaining and advertising the advantages of a sedentary lifestyle and tried to convince people that changing their lifestyle could bring them development. The hunters they were reaching were not really convinced by the advantages of cultivation and sedentarism, but because the number of Maasai that crossed the region and used the public water-wells had increased recently and because Loosurutia promised them a political voice to secure their claims for water and land, they finally agreed. From '91 to '93 most hunters of Ngapapa that formerly lived scattered at the slopes of the mountain moved to one specific place in the north, close to the natural water-wells, of the region and formed a settlement, which became state-acknowledged in 1993. With the logistic help of LAMP, a village area was demarcated and a village council and a chairman were appointed (consisting of former hunter-gatherers).

Talking to the chairman Ngoisolo (who headed the village from '93 until today) I got the impression that the change of lifestyle from hunting and gathering to cultivation went quite fast and very smooth. He told me that especially the NGO KINNAPA was very helpful to the villagers because it provided seeds and machines to clear and cultivate land for free. As every village member received enough land for cultivation to sustain livelihood and because of several good harvests, some people gained a little wealth soon and were able to invest in cattle, more land or even their own machines, which they rent nowadays for small sums.

When I asked the chairman if he still considers himself an Akie despite his having left his foraging way of life, he responded that changing his subsistence did not automatically mean he changed his identity. He said to me that especially the Akie of Ngapapa would “highlight their cultural heritage” because they maintained their own language (which is not related to any neighboring language) and because they continued gathering honey, which is an Akie activity only. He elaborated that the Akie had always adapted to changing environments and so another change would not dislocate them from their culture but enhance it. Nevertheless, Ngoisolo admitted that even the gathering of honey had changed, because nowadays the people of Ngapapa keep bees in boxes (which they learned from KINNAPA) instead of gathering wild honey.

Until 2000 only Akie were living in Ngapapa, but this has now also changed because the number of pastoralists and farmers that migrated to the region increased strongly. This has several reasons: a general population growth, development policies that promote a sedentary lifestyle, and the work of NGOs that will be discussed in the next chapter. Notably many pastoralists moved to the plains close to Ngapapa because lots of pastures within the District have been occupied recently by farmers and therefore they were forced to move. In addition, the region’s reliable water wells attracted many farming people to come and settle. Whereas some pastoralists still maintain their purely nomadic lifestyle and graze cattle on the pastures surrounding the mountain, other people started to settle and cultivate outside the village-land of Ngapapa. But as the natural water-wells lie on the village-land, pastoralists and farmers regularly enter the village in order to fetch water. Some Maasai even found niches inside the village because they married Akie women and therefore became integrated into the village-assembly. Since several years, also several Gogo<sup>143</sup> and Rangi<sup>144</sup> families moved to Ngapapa, but as the Akie fear to lose numerical superiority within the village (and so the control of local administration) the village government allows only few “outsiders” to stay permanently inside village borders. “Foreigners” (which means in fact everybody that is not considered to be an Akie or married to an Akie) are just allowed to trade or work on the fields of village-members on a time-limited basis, but are barred from getting their own property (land) within the village. Incoming Akie from other regions, on the other hand, are immediately integrated into the village assembly if they wish to come and stay in Ngapapa. This is due to an ethnic solidarity with other foragers who frequently experience serious forms of marginalization

---

<sup>143</sup> The Gogo are an ethnic group that settled traditionally in the Dodoma Region in Central Tanzania. There exists no evidence for Gogo settling in Kiteto until recent times.

<sup>144</sup> The Rangi are another ethnic group that also migrated to Kiteto recently. They originally settled westwards of the District in Kondoa.

elsewhere. During my stay I met several Akie individuals and families that moved recently into the village because it was the only place within the District where they just can ask for land and don't have to compete for it. Actually the village council consisted of 24 Akie and one Maasai (married to an Akie), which reflects the strong political representation of former foragers in Ngapapa.

Because the Akie possess such a strong political representation in Ngapapa they have generally better access to resources like water or land than Akie in other parts of the District. Especially the access to farmland (which is determined by the village-government that administrates and distributes all village land) is guaranteed for the inhabitants of Ngapapa. If any problems or discussions about land emerge in the village assembly, chairman Ngosiolo is called to intervene and conciliate the dispute. When I visited the village in November 2010 the chairman explained to me that all inhabitants of Ngapapa knew about their land rights and how to realize them. Hence, land conflicts like they are found in many other parts of the District do not emerge.

The biggest challenge for the people of Ngapapa and its surroundings is the accessibility of fresh drinking water. Although the natural water wells of the region are based on village-land, the village government cannot avoid "strangers", like nomadic pastoralists that cross the region, or settlers from outside the village, to enter the land and fetch water. This has led to increasing conflicts about this scarce resource because the natural wells don't provide enough water for all animals and humans. Conflicts emerged especially between passing nomadic pastoralists and farming settlers, because herders claim to have used these wells traditionally, whereas farmers don't understand why they should relinquish water because of animals. To solve this problem the village council contacted the Ward and District Governments and asked for an artificial water pump to draw more water. In 2008 a new pumping system, consisting of several pumping stations, was established in Ngapapa and the problems seemed to be solved. But because the engineers estimated the groundwater level to high the pump did not reach deep enough and broke down in October 2010, which immediately led to a new round of conflicts.

From 1993 until today, Ngapapa developed in many ways like a typical Tanzanian village. A market was established, attracting people from surrounding areas, and in 2006 a new primary school was built. When I visited the village I was told that most of the children were young Akie from all over the District. Most of these children were supported by an NGO located in Arusha headed by a private American entrepreneur, who knows Kiteto and its

peoples very well and who is especially interested in supporting young Akie (which will be explained in the next chapter).

As stated the village of Ngapapa is unique in Tanzania. It is the only accredited settlement that hosts an Akie majority. Because the village government has been successful to avoid the immigration of too many non-Akie the future of the settlement seems to be secured. However, this is only a superficial observation. Legally the village government is not allowed to forbid other citizens to immigrate. But as the location of the village is very remote, it is less affected by penetrating farmers. In addition to that most of the demarcated village land has been already cleared and was given to Akie villagers. This gives a good excuse to the village government to not accept newcomers and to tell them that all available land has been taken. Because Kiteto still provides big areas of uncultivated land the District Government did not intervene to Ngapapa politics of land distribution yet. However, although the village certainly provides the most secure circumstances for the Akie in the entire district the future of the settlement is entirely open.

## Chapter 5

### External Influences Shaping the Economics of Identity

The previous chapters have already indicated that external “stakeholders” (like NGOs and private donors) have had a strong impact on how the Akie adapted to a quickly changing environment, and how they negotiated their distinct ethnic identity. This chapter intends to introduce these stakeholders and to discover how and why their work became important for the Akie, and how it influenced both economic processes and identity formation of people. I use Tania Li’s idea that the establishment of nongovernmental organizations might strongly influence people’s social environment and therefore opens up new possibilities for them to re-position. Through this re-positioning people are forced to re-negotiate their ethnic-identity on the one hand and to further re-adapt economically on the other hand to ongoing processes.

In order to understand how the Akie were affected by the establishment of NGOs and how external stakeholders in general gained influence on the re-positioning of the people, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section gives a general overview on the foundation of NGOs in Tanzania, the second and third part discuss how the Akie of Kiteto are actually linked to these institutions and which role external benefactors play for the re-positioning of people.

#### *5.1 NGOs in Tanzania: General Overview*

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private donors that purposefully support specific projects possess a long history in Africa. Although most of these organizations emerged in post-colonial times, some institutions (like for example distinct missionary churches) have been founded much earlier. In Tanzania the establishment of NGOs has rapidly increased during the past twenty years. According to Claire Mercer this was caused by the decline of Tanzanian Socialism and the ensuing implementation of liberal politics, which permitted and encouraged NGOs to take a greater role in the country's development.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>145</sup> Mercer, “Reconceptualizing State-Society Relations in Tanzania: Are NGOs Making a Difference?”, p. 248-249

In 1988 twenty-two NGOs founded the Tanzania Association of Nongovernmental Organizations (TANGO). The association was formed as a common platform to discuss particular development policies and to generate common strategies. Furthermore, the cooperation was meant to be a powerful umbrella-organization which could put some pressure on the state. At the moment TANGO consists of more than 500 NGOs and is interconnected with several global institutions, like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Because the variety of NGOs that work within Tanzania is huge, TANGO determined distinct thematic sections that cover most programs of each organization. Those sections are: justice, peace, good governance, human rights, gender equality and equity, and sustainable human development.<sup>146</sup>

The Maasai steppe of north-central Tanzania is an area that has been increasingly penetrated by NGOs during the last two decades. Due to its specific history and environment (concerning social, natural, political and economic factors) most organizations established in this area either engaged with the conservation of particular natural habitats (in order to secure wildlife), or with the preservation of specific peoples and cultures. Hence, some NGOs recently started to address indigenous policies. As stated in the previous chapters the issue of indigeneity is a strongly debated issue within both the social sciences and international politics. However, in the peculiar sphere of development policies the concept is usually not questioned, and many NGOs are currently supporting people who are defined by the UN as “indigenous” (like the Maasai or Akie). Dorothy Hodgson states that since 1994 more than a hundred INGOs (Indigenous Nongovernmental Organizations) were established within the Maasai-areas of Tanzania.<sup>147</sup> These INGOs have formed another umbrella organization, called the Pastoralists Indigenous NGOs Forum (PINGO), which is linked to the big donor organizations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and the International Workgroup for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) that again are connected to the UN. INGOs have gained a big impact on the political and social environment of distinct regions. As they are purposefully supporting marginalized, indigenous groups, they have a significant impact on social, political and economic conditions in peculiar areas. Although the central Tanzanian government generally refuses to recognize the concept of indigeneity, it usually has not stopped INGOs to implement their programs. The impact of this development can be observed, for example, in peoples' changing social and political status. While most indigenous

---

<sup>146</sup> TANGO, About TANGO, [http://www.tango.or.tz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=35&Itemid=55](http://www.tango.or.tz/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=35&Itemid=55) (04.10.2011).

<sup>147</sup> Hodgson, “Precarious Alliances: The Cultural Politics and Structural Predicaments of the Indigenous Rights Movement in Tanzania”, p. 1086.

peoples were originally widely excluded from political or economic decisions, some of them achieved a better public standing. A quit remarkable number of natives has started to maintain their cultural heritage, or began to plead for national and international recognition. Many indigenous peoples are actually working for an INGO and some even started to establish their own organizations.<sup>148</sup>

In addition to the social and political impact on the immediate environment of indigenous peoples, many INGOs are directly having an influence on the culture of various groups. Many INGOs purposefully implement programs that change the lifestyle of their “target groups”. Like stated previously the Akie of Kiteto for example started to cultivate crops because some NGOs taught and subsidized them to do so. The question that arises from this is of course: Why are INGOs influencing peoples' mode of subsistence in such a manner, if they understand themselves to be the saviours of “indigenous cultures”, and why are they accepted by the Akie? Most of my informants working in nongovernmental organizations answered this question by first stating that cultural change and development is generally inevitable. They explained that it would be impossible to save all cultural features, but that it would be desirable to conserve some cultural characteristics. As the majority of them belonged to an “indigenous group” themselves they justified their actions by relating on the memory of their ancestors.

However, by purposefully changing peoples' perceived indigenous (or traditional) cultures, INGOs contribute to reshape people's economics of identity. This chapter discusses the influence of INGOs and private donors on indigenous populations. By focusing on the Akie of Kiteto the section intends to decode the social and political meaning of these organizations for the people.

## *5.2 INGOs and the Akie of Kiteto*

Nongovernmental Organizations possess a relatively short history in Kiteto. As most parts of the District belong to the Maasai steppe, which has been a rather remote area until today, the territory was only recently penetrated by NGOs. When I visited the area in autumn 2010, the District just hosted 35 different nongovernmental organizations (which is a small number compared to other regions of the country).<sup>149</sup> Most NGOs were founded after 2005, and only four institutions were registered in Kiteto before the millennium. The majority of

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 1086-1088.

<sup>149</sup> I got access to the list of NGOs by Development Officer Joseph Maleba at the 18.10.2010 in Kibaya. The list consisted of 35 registered NGOs and might have been actualized meanwhile.

nongovernmental organizations working within District borders focus on the issues of HIV or public education, and only two local NGOs (namely KINNAPA & CORDS) are actually concerned with indigenous matters. However, these two organizations, and the Swedish NGO LAMP (which was closed in early 2010) gained enough influence to affect social, political and economic conditions in Kiteto.

The first NGO that engaged with the concept of indigeneity was KINNAPA, which has been registered in 1992. The name KINNAPA is both, an abbreviation of its six founding villages (Kibaya, Kimana, Njoro, Ndaleta, Namelok, and Partimbo) and the Maa-word for “we help each other”<sup>150</sup>. The organization was founded by a group of locals who originally wanted to secure the land-rights of nomadic herders within the District. It received initial funding from OXFAM-NOVIB (a big development-organization) and has been financially supported by other international enterprises (like WaterAid, TROCAIRE, WaterCan, World Food Programme etc.). Since its foundation KINNAPA has been headed by a group of local pastoralists, and basically employed local herders.

As most politicians who work in Kiteto are also self-professed Maasai, the relationship between NGO-workers and District-officials has been rather close. In some cases politicians even became employees of KINNAPA after finishing their career (or vice versa). Because the organization was founded by traditional herders most of its original effort was aimed at people with a pastoral background. However, during the early 90s KINNAPA additionally developed a minor program to support the foragers of the District. As mentioned above the plan of supporting the Akie was originally formulated by Kiteto's former Member of Parliament, Benedict Loosurita, who closely worked together with KINNAPA until his retirement and death in 2008. Although Loosurutia was a politician and no aid-worker he had a specific interest in developing and implementing such a program: 1) He was a Maasai and therefore identified with peoples that struggle for indigenous rights in general. 2) He was an ambitious politician who believed he could combine national development (e.g. settling down people) and international politics (by supporting a marginalized, indigenous group). Furthermore, the current chairman of Partimbo Ward, Julius Olekeiya, who was a close friend of Benedict Loosurutia, told me that the former Member of Parliament wanted to be remembered as “...the politician who saved the Akie of Kiteto from extinction”.<sup>151</sup> By establishing a specific Akie-village, Loosurutia intended to create a secure space for Kiteto's

---

<sup>150</sup> NGO KINNAPA, About Us, [http://nexustz.com/kinnapa/about\\_us.html](http://nexustz.com/kinnapa/about_us.html) (11.10.2011).

<sup>151</sup> Interview, Julius Olekeiya, Chairman of Partimbo Ward, Kibaya, 22.12.2010.

traditional foragers which offered them a minimum of political self-determination and some nominal power.

When Benedict Loosurutia informed KINNAPA about his plan to create a specific development-program for the Akie in Kiteto, the NGO declared its willingness to contribute. Loosurutia's idea was to settle a big number of Akie at a distinct place in the District to establish a village. However, as KINNAPA is only a small organization with a limited budget, Loosurutia additionally contacted a NGO called LAMP (which is the short-form for Land Management Programme). On the contrary to KINNAPA, LAMP was founded by a Swedish Development-Organization and therefore disposed of a bigger budget. The NGO started to work in Kiteto in 1991 and left the District in spring 2010. Its basic goal was to assist Kiteto's Land Office to register villages and to demarcate village-land. However, due to additional collaboration with KINNAPA and Kiteto's District Government, LAMP contributed to launch the village of Ngapapa.

Between 1991 and 1994 all Akie that were living in the area of Ngapapa were prompted to settle on the northern slopes of the mountain in order to form a village. The spot was chosen because of its relatively gentle climate, its comparably good rainfall probability, and its closeness to a natural water-well. According to my information some Akie did not really want to settle at a common place, because it reminded them of Nyerere's villagization-politics<sup>152</sup>, which had forced lots of them to live socially excluded on the fringes of settlements. However, Ngapapa's former and current chairman Ngoisolo told me that some foragers also perceived the process of sedentarization as a chance to gain a little more political and economic influence. According to him some people were excited to receive the factual control over a distinct, demarcated area that promised more protection from the power claims of others and offered more political self-determination. Furthermore, the chairman stated that in contrast to the 70s most Akie were not forced to leave their customary homelands. This made a big difference to them.<sup>153</sup> By talking to some of the elders of the village, I additionally heard that the involvement of NGOs within the process of sedentarization played an important role as well. Some villagers said that they just stayed in the village because aid-workers

---

<sup>152</sup> The politics of villagization were part of Nyerere's Socialist visions. They were implemented in the 70s and lasted until the decline of socialism. As Nyerere intended to build up a socialist state based on agricultural production, he started to launch villages all over the country and forced people to settle and cultivate there. As most settlements were built close to roads and rivers, many people who lived in the peripheries of Tanzania were forced to leave their homelands. The politics of villagization also affected many Akie, who were forced to leave the savannas and move into such villages. According to Kaare most of them secretly left these villages after a few years, and returned to the bush, where they pursued their foraging lifestyle. (Kaare, "Coping with State Pressure to Change: How the Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Tanzania Seek to Maintain their Identity", p. 218-220).

<sup>153</sup> Interview: Chairman Ngoisolo, Ngapapa, 22.11.2010.

assured them they would care for them. While especially the first few years were tough for the new inhabitants of Ngapapa (e.g. bush-land had to be cleared, houses to be built and fields to be demarcated) the situation of the village improved after the end of the '90s. According to KINNAPA's current chairman Samwel Olekao and most villagers of Ngapapa, this was due to the constant support of NGOs, which frequently offered the Akie unpaid assistance (in forms of free seeds and mechanical support) and helped them to sell their products.

While LAMP stopped all forms of assistance after demarcating the village-area (at the end of the 90s), KINNAPA continued supporting Ngapapa. In close cooperation with the District's Development Office the organization started to plan the infrastructure of the settlement. Hence, KINNAPA helped to establish a primary school (opened in 2007) and sponsored a flour-refiner in order to produce maize flour. The organization also placed several artificial beehives in order to stimulate the villagers to harvest more honey. As honey still plays an important role for most Akie (explained in the previous chapters), especially the establishment of artificial beehives became a big economic success. The villagers of Ngapapa now do not need to leave the settlement anymore to search for honey, and therefore have enough time to focus on crop production. The use of artificial beehives allowed the Akie to gain a small surplus of honey, sold on regional and international markets. With the support of KINNAPA and other Western donors, a remarkable amount of honey has been even transported to the USA, where it is advertised as "bush-honey" and sold for high prices. According to my informants, most of the earnings went almost directly back to Ngapapa, where it has been distributed to the village assembly.

Apart from the village of Ngapapa the support of Kiteto's traditional foragers by nongovernmental organizations is rather limited. This is due to two basic reasons: 1) The Akie of Kiteto did not yet form an own NGO to maintain their distinct claims. 2) Many nongovernmental organizations have not yet seen the necessity to implement a program which focuses particularly on the support of traditional hunter-gatherers. Apart from the already mentioned organizations of KINNAPA and LAMP only the NGO CORDS (which is the short form of Community Research and Development Services) launched another minor program to assist the Akie of Kiteto. CORDS is a big organization which has its headquarters in Arusha, and is connected to the international development sector via TANGO and PINGO (see the previous section). It has been founded by Maasai-pastoralists during the '90s and is currently subdivided into six distinct branches that work in the Districts of Monduli, Simanjiro, Kiteto, Ngorongoro, Longido and Arumeru.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> NGO CORDS, Home: Context and Background, <http://www.cordstz.org/index.html> (17.10.2011).

CORDS was registered in Kiteto in 2000 and was originally engaged in the protection of pastures and livestock, but also tried to enforce the land rights of herders and gender equality. However, in 2004 the organization started to focus more on the village of Napilo Konya and began to support the Akie of the region (as it has been stated within previous chapters). The NGO implemented workshops that informed the people of the region how to cultivate crops and that supported them to change their foraging livelihood (by providing them with seeds and machines). Like in the case of KINNAPA, the program was keenly observed by the local District Office, which asks for weekly appraisals. In Napilo Konya the work of CORDS was essential for the foundation of a stable Akie settlement and for the increasing sedentarization of the foragers. Villagers told me that they had settled down and started to cultivate crops because the organization had told them to do so, and because it supported them with seeds and machines. However, on the contrary to Ngapapa the village of Napilo Konya has not yet succeeded to receive an officially accredited status, and so the settlement depends on the good political performance of its head-village Kimana.

### *5.3 Private Donors and External Sponsors*

In addition to the two mentioned NGOs the Akie of Kiteto are supported by some other benefactors who seem to have a strong influence on how the people use and negotiate their ethnic-identity and how they position within a transforming environment. Some of my informants told me that they began to conceptualize and highlight their “cultural heritage” because private benefactors asked them to do so, and because these people rewarded their efforts in different ways. According to my information especially two private donors have been supporting the Akie of Kiteto recently: 1) A German missionary (named Pater (Father) Stefano), who lived and worked in Kiteto during the 90s but still is in contact with some of my informants, and 2) an American entrepreneur (whom the Akie call Daudi), who also visited Kiteto in the early 90s and who has been returning occasionally.

As my informants explained, the private American entrepreneur first visited the Akie at the beginning of the ‘90s and returned to Kiteto several times. From the time of his first visit the man began to assist the Akie. According to my interpretation the American donor has a personal interest to preserve Akies cultural-identity. My informants told me that the man specifically supports people that have a foraging past, and that he encourages them to maintain their “cultural distinctiveness”. When I asked my informants why the “white man” was so ambitious to support the Akie, they told me that the man had lived in the Maasai

steppe for several months to hunt big game in the early 90s. During this time he was accompanied by several Akie-hunters, who helped him to track game and with whom he became friends. After the American left the Maasai steppe he did not forget about his trappers and therefore began to support and fund the Akie externally. He financed the establishment of an artificial water-pump in Napilo Konya and the foundation of a primary school in Ngapapa. He also began to provide school-sponsorships to Akie children. Due to this funding most Akie children are now sent to schools. In addition the benefactor encouraged several commercial hunting agencies in Tanzania to employ traditional Akie hunters for trapping down game. Chairman Ngoisolo told me, for example, that he had worked for a specific hunting-agency that was active in Selous National Park during the late 90s. He explained that he received the job just because of the intervention of his American friend.<sup>155</sup>

In addition, the white entrepreneur established a cultural tourist program. He started to advertise the Akie's "cultural distinctiveness" and began to organize trips from Arusha to Napilo Konya. In order to attract tourists the American began to advertise Akie foraging tradition in the internet and promised "an unforgettable trip to one of the last hidden nooks" in Tanzania.<sup>156</sup> Thomas Kimbey and former village chairman Olesaneti told me that the American entrepreneur developed the program in collaboration with the former village-government. They stated that since its foundation several groups of *wazungu wageni* (white visitors) have visited the village. According to my informants a typical visitors group consists of about ten to twenty tourists, and some staff members of the tourist agency. Because of Napilo Konya's peripheral location, the tourists usually stay for about three to four days in a temporary bush camp outside the village. During their stay the agency organizes day-tours to the village and to the bush that introduce the Akie people's daily life. In addition, my informants told me that hunting trips are arranged where some former hunters present their hunting skills and show the visitors how they used to trap wild game, and how they were gathering honey in the past.<sup>157</sup>

The visit of the tourists has been very profitable for the villagers of Napilo Konya. My informants told me that the American entrepreneur was always paying the village government, which distributed the money equally to all Akie members of the settlement. However, I was also told that the donor had very clear ideas of what he wanted to present to the tourists. Thomas Kimbey stated that some days before the entrepreneur planned his trips to Napilo Konya, he was contacting him personally (via cell phone) and briefed him about the

---

<sup>155</sup> Interview: Chairman Ngoisolo, Ngapapa, 22.11.2010.

<sup>156</sup> Dorobo Safaris, <http://www.marilynmason.com/dorobo.html> (17.10.2011).

<sup>157</sup> Group Interview with Thomas Kimbey and Olesaneti, Napilo Konya, 27.11.2010.

group and what he intended to show them. When I asked Kimbey what he thought about the tourists he responded very positively. He explained that people would like the *wazungu* (white people), because they tip generously, and Akie people would be generally grateful to get an additional source of income. Furthermore, he told me that this form of tourism would be good for the village as a whole, because it contributed to the preservation of customs and traditions (like hunting game with poisoned arrows or climbing a baobab tree to gather honey). However, as most Akie abandoned hunting and gathering the show is in fact a pure tourist attraction. Nevertheless it contributed to the establishment of a new Akie self-confidence and led to a re-valuation of ethnic identity.

The other private donor, who still plays an important role for the Akie of Kiteto, is the Protestant Father Stefano who lived with his wife in the District during the 90s and left it about ten years ago. According to my informants, the German missionary supported the Akie because he wanted to improve their marginalized status and their impoverished living conditions. The pastor founded a small wooden chapel in the bush where he held services in the past and which still is used by other pastors who sporadically visit the village. In addition to his missionary effort, the priest was engaged with education. He began to collaborate with the American entrepreneur and provided special seats for Akie children in his missionary school in Kibaya. As the pastor was able to communicate in Maa fluently he convinced many parents to entrust their children to his custody and to send them to town. After the pastor left Kiteto he continued to support the children of the Akie privately: he still provides scholarships for young Akie to send them to primary school. According to my information these grants are paid to the American entrepreneur who administers and distributes them.

Because the two sponsors and NGOs specifically focus on supporting people with a foraging tradition they play an important role for the question of Akie self-positioning. They created an awareness about the meaning of ethnic-identity which people might not have possessed in the past. While the Akie lived in close relationships to their neighbours in the past and inter-married with them, an idea of ethnicity existed but was not articulated. Due to the effort of these sponsors and NGOs a new connotation of identity has been created. It has now become beneficial for people to identify themselves as Akie and to receive special treatment. The involvement of external sponsors has therefore led to a revival of Akie culture. While people have changed their modes of subsistence within the past twenty years and assimilated to their changing environment, the meaning of hunting and gathering received a boost although at the same time its economic role virtually decreased. Hence, tourists have even started to visit Kiteto in order to get in touch with “traditional foragers” and to observe

their customs and traditions. This gives new symbolic value to the ethnic identity of the people.

## Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to discover how the ethnic identity of a specific group might be materialized by people, how it correlates with economic processes and how people might position within a constantly changing social and natural environment. As the example of the Akie has shown these questions are not easy to answer because people perceive identity differently and use their distinct ethnic status variously to position within their specific surroundings. However, it has also been indicated that some trends are identifiable. Most Akie are actually aware that their status of being a traditionally foraging group opens them new opportunities to secure their currently marginalized livelihood. With the establishment of particular development programs and the arrival of external sponsors their formerly disadvantaged status was transformed into a beneficial good. Some Akie have learned that materializing ethnic identity and claiming an “indigenous heritage” might help them to influence economic processes and to secure their subsistence. This has been clearly highlighted in the last chapter which depicted how claiming a particular ethnic-identity is actually used by people to apply for the sponsorships of external donors.

However, as the thesis has also shown the correlation between ethnic-identity and economics is very complex. The second chapter indicates how difficult it is to define a closed ethnic unit, and how problematic it is to talk about a specific ethnic-identity. The section demonstrates that cultural parameters, which are scientifically supposed to form the basis of ethnic-identity, are frequently unstable and therefore cannot be used as constant variables. Particularly the examples of the Akiel-language and the changes within people’s modes of subsistence have shown that people are reacting differently to environmental influences. It has been demonstrated that most traditional foragers are actually communicating in Maa, because it is the “trading language” of the region, and that only small minorities are still able to talk in the mother-tongue of their forefathers. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates that cultural borders between ethnic-groups might mingle and therefore are difficult to determine. As the phenomena of intertribal marriages and shared cultural rituals, like the initiation rite (*jando*), have shown, connections between traditional herders and foragers are fluid.

Although the cohabitation of people with different cultural backgrounds created a complex society, people themselves possess a clear idea about ethnic belonging. Especially in villages that host very diverse populations of sedentarizing foragers, herders and immigrating settlers’ categorizations on the basis of ethnic parameters are normal. The examples of

Loolera and Namelok clearly illustrate how such cohabitation might look like. Although the Akie are probably the autochthonous population of the region, they were pushed aside by immigrating societies that just took over their land and forced them to live at the fringes of the village. In both settlements the Akie possess no political representation and are marginalized by other villagers. As the second chapter illustrates the reasons for exclusion are manifold and reach back to people's foraging past.

The chapter also indicates possible correlations between the ethnic-identity of people and economic processes. It demonstrates that particularly wealthy people are using their distinct ethnic status to profit from it economically. The example of the Maasai-youngsters shows that especially traditional pastoralists are actually using their ethnic status to find "cheap" wives among the Akie, who are generally poorer than them. Because the boundaries between both groups are traditionally close neither herder nor foragers possess moralist prejudices against such connections. In addition the chapter depicts how a changing natural and social environment and increasing development affects people's cultural values. Whereas material goods, e.g. houses, were not important for the traditionally nomadic societies in the past they received a much better standing lately. As most people settled down and started to cultivate crops, economic processes transformed in general. Akies bride price for example is not longer paid in traditional currencies, like honey and skins, but in livestock, maize and paper money. Especially the Maasai, who are traditionally the most influential group of the region, have been usually the profiteers from this development. For several reasons they got nominated for highest political positions within Kiteto and are frequently in order to guide the political and economic development of the district.

The precise reasons for social and environmental change in Kiteto that strongly influenced economic processes and therefore the livelihood of people are give in chapter three. I identified several components that contributed to the economics of identity and that strongly influenced Akies subsistence.

The first component that influenced the economics of identity was Tanzania's politics of sedentarization. As the colonial powers had only little interest in the Maasai steppe these kinds of politics were firstly introduced by Julius Nyerere in the early '70s. Nyerere's program of villagization forced the majority of Tanzanians to live in state villages that were established throughout the entire country. According to my data also the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies of Kiteto were affected by these policies. However, only a small number of traditional nomads stayed in stabile settlements and the majority returned to the savanna after a few years. One important reason why so many herders and foragers returned to the bush was

the bad living-conditions within the villages. As the Maasai steppe is a very dry area that only allows limited cultivation it was not an option for most hunter-gatherers that additionally were marginalized within the villages because of their foraging past. Therefore many of them left Nyerere's villages and continued their former life in their former homelands

With the end of socialism and the rise of political and economic liberalization during the early '90s the situation changed in Kiteto. From this time onwards the number of companies and nongovernmental organizations that penetrated the area increased rapidly. Those organizations generally supported Tanzania national economy and brought new technological know-how. New roads and offices were established and Kiteto became better connected to the rest of the country. This led to an improvement of infrastructure and a betterment of development. Artificial water-wells were established and programs emerged that intended to improve the health and water-situation of the area. At the same time the regional District Administration continued the national policies of sedentarization and tried to settle down people. As the living situation within stabile villages improved, because many settlements became connected to roads and water provisions, it was easier to convince nomadic people to settle down. Particularly in Kibaya Town and the southern parts of the district, where development and infrastructure improved earliest and fastest, the number of sedentarizing nomads increased. The more remote areas in northern-east Kiteto on the contrary were penetrated much later and still are not connected well to roads and water provisions. This explains why Namelok and Loolera were affected earlier by sedentarization and development than Napilo Konya and Ngapapa.

With increasing development and the improvement of infrastructure the district became more attractive to cultivating settlers from other parts of the country who frequently faced problematic living conditions themselves. As I explained in the third chapter most migrants that moved to Kiteto had problems to gain access to cultivation land within their homelands and therefore were desperate for proper cultivation-land. The District Administration was aware of this situation and therefore began to advertise Kiteto's pristine soil to attract more settlers and to fasten the process of "agrarian development" in the region. This led to increasing competition for land and water within many parts of the district.

Akies reaction to the changes within their social and natural environment is presented in the fourth chapter. Although some Akie continued to hunt and gather most of them abandoned their foraging tradition. This change was mainly caused by the impact of regional policies and the improvement of infrastructure, and by the establishment of different NGOs that began to support the Akie. In Namelok and Loolera the sedentarization-process of the

Akie began in an earlier phase than in other parts of the district. As both areas became transformed to cultivation ground in the early '90s they already changed before most nongovernmental organizations were founded in the late '90s. That explains why the Akie in these regions developed different modes of adaptation to environmental changes, and therefore positioned differently. As the chapter highlights most traditional foragers of Namelok and Loolera assimilated to other sedentarizing people and tried not to be identified ethnically as traditional foragers, because otherwise they would have to face marginalization. They borrowed and/or took over new identities and tried to survive by cultivating crops or breeding livestock.

In Napilo Konya and Ngapapa environmental transformations started little later and therefore the Akie of both regions continued foraging a little longer. When the former Member of Parliament Benedict Loosurutia decided to work together with the NGO KINNAPA and determined to create an Akie-village in Ngapapa the infrastructure and development of Kiteto was still in its beginnings. That means that only few cultivators had been immigrating to the region and most local pastoralists had not been sedentarized. On the contrary, Ngapapa became something like an oasis because it provided the first artificial water-pump of the area and hosted the first sedentary population. Furthermore it was the first hamlet of the region that became connected to the public road-system. For the Akie of Ngapapa the establishment of a stately accredited village meant a shelter from resource-competition and marginalization. As they provided the strongest sedentary population-group within the village, they were able to live relatively autonomous from other societies and therefore were able to determine the local matters of their settlement and its land.

In Napilo Konya the situation was little different. As the area was one of the last spots that became connected to the infrastructure-system it was the last Akie-region to be sedentarized. However due to the contact to close friends and neighbours the Akie of Napilo Konya knew about environmental changes in Kiteto. When Father Stefano and the American entrepreneur Daudi arrived in their village, they already had an idea about the life of other Akie within the district. As they saw the increasing problems of marginalization and resource-competition in other areas, they were glad when NGOs and private sponsors offered them support on the basis of ethnicity. The example of Ngapapa demonstrated them how to prevent resource competition and marginalization, and so it was not difficult for external supporters to convince them of settling and cultivating. However, as the sponsors arrived relatively late in Napilo Konya and did not work together smoothly at the beginning, the process of sedentarization took several years and was not very coordinated. Many Akie started to settle

and cultivate rather unsystematic, which impeded Napilo Konya's accreditation as a state village. At the same time herders and farming migrants started to penetrate the area and began to settle down. As the examples of Thomas Kimbey and Peter Olekano have shown the Akie were quiet powerless to the "invasion of foreigners". Many of them lost cultivated and uncultivated land to migrants and were pushed aside from their customary ground. As NGOs and donors still treat them specifically and continue to support them, a new perception of ethnicity and self-confidence has developed. Like in the case of Ngapapa the Akie of Napilo Konya started to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness and began to claim their customary rights, in the hope to receive external support.

Akies changing perception and utilization of ethnic-identity was basically caused by the impact of INGOs and external donors, which is highlighted in the fifth chapter. While most Akie originally developed different modes of adaptation to cope with marginalization and environmental change, a big number has learned to use ethnic-identity in order to arrange with supporters. Because INGOs like KINNAPA and CORDS have taught Kiteto's traditional foragers to claim customary rights, and because they rewarded their "outing" by establishing schools and water-wells for them, many Akie developed a new self-confidence. Private donors like Father Stefano and the American entrepreneur contributed to this process by providing scholarships to Akie-children and supporting adults to find jobs in hunting agencies.

The manifestation of a new Akie self-confidence can be observed by the revival of traditional cultural phenomena that were threatened to get lost. The Akie of Ngapapa have started to remember their customary language, whereas the villagers of Napilo Konya and the American donor started to establish a cultural tourist program, which introduces to people's traditional lifestyle. In addition to that the Akie have learned that exporting honey and selling it to high prices provides a further source of income.

Most Akie I met are actually appreciating the revival of distinct cultural features. Especially many elders who were worried that the Akie would have to adapt to a changing environment by abandoning their cultural values entirely expressed their relief. The former chairman of Napilo Konya Olesaneti explained me that without remembering the life of the ancestors and the highlighting the hunt the spirit of the Akie would die out. He told me that a complete assimilation of cultivating lifestyle would lead to the extinction of the people.

Summarizing it can be stated that the Akie have developed different strategies to cope with environmental changes and to position within a transforming habitat. Almost all of them have abandoned their foraging lifestyle and took over different modes of subsistence.

Nevertheless most of them did not dump their ethnic-identity. The reasons for that are manifold. Some Akie did not abandon their ethnic-identity because their neighbours still identified them as such and therefore they could not, while others have learned to utilize it in order to claim the support of donors. Because the Akie are a marginalized group in most regions they are very vulnerable and so the survival of their ethnic-identity at least partly depends on economic success. This success can only be guaranteed if they are able to participate equally to economic processes. The Akie of Kiteto have learned that one possible key of economic participation is to materialize ethnic-identity, and to claim an indigenous status. Like many other “indigenous ethnic groups” they actually receive international support and therefore experience specific treatment from sponsors. For that reason the number of Akie has not decreased during the past few years, but rather increased. While Marianne Bakken estimated the number of traditional foragers in Kiteto about 3000 in the late 90s<sup>158</sup>, IWGIA identified more than 5000 Akie in 2010<sup>159</sup>.

The story of the Akie gives an idea how the economics of identity might work and how economic processes can correlate with the identity of people. It proves that a connection between both scientific concepts can be identified ethnographically and that Akerlof’s and Kranton’s theory stretches over a much wider field of social sciences.

---

<sup>158</sup> Bakken, *Becoming Visible*, 2004, p. 1

<sup>159</sup> IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2010*, p. 492

## Glossary

<i>bustani ndogo</i>	small garden (Kiswahili)
<i>Dorobo</i>	person without cattle (Kiswahili)
<i>ethnos</i>	nation (Greek)
<i>Il-Torobo</i>	person without cattle, person from the forest (Maa)
<i>jando</i>	initiation rite (Maa)
<i>kraal</i>	homestead (Maa)
<i>makata</i>	honey bag (Maa)
<i>mwenyekiti</i>	chairman (Kiswahili)
<i>mzungu</i> (sing.)	European, white person (Kiswahili)
<i>Ndorobo</i>	person without cattle, Tse Tse Fly (Kiswahili)
<i>shamba</i>	field (Kiswahili)
<i>Tororeitra</i>	highest god (Akiek)
<i>wazungu</i> (pl.)	European, white person (Kiswahili)

## Bibliography

- Akerlof, George & Kranton, Rachel (2000), "Economics and Identity", in: *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 15 (3): 715-753.
- Atkinson, Paul & Hammersley, Martyn (1994), "Ethnography and Participant Observation", in: Denzin, N. (ed.) & Lincoln, Y. (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, pp. 248-261.
- Barnard, Alan (2006), "Kalahari Revisionism, Vienna and the 'Indigenous Peoples' Debate", in: *Social Anthropology* 14 (1): 1-16.
- Bakken, Marianne Hovind (2004), *Becoming Visible: Economic and Social Transformation and Marginalization of Akie Hunters and Gatherers in Northern Tanzania*, Oslo, University of Oslo, Department of Social Anthropology (PhD thesis)..
- Barth, Fredrik (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget – London, Allen & Unwin.
- Beteille, André (1998), "The Idea of Indigenous Peoples", in: *Current Anthropology* 39 (2): 187-192.
- Berntsen, John (1980), Book Review of: "Warfare among East African Herders", in: *African Economic History* 9:194-196.
- Blackburn, Roderic (1996) "Fission, Fusion, and Foragers in East Africa: Micro- and Macroprocesses of Diversity and Integration among Okiek Groups", in: Kent, S. (ed.), *Cultural Diversity among Twentieth Century Foragers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 188-213.
- Blackburn, Roderic (1976), "Okiek History", in: Ogot, B. (ed.), *Kenya Before 1900*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, pp. 53-84.
- Boos, Eric (2004), *Property Rights, Pastoral People and Problems with Privatization in Tanzania*, Morogoro, Tanzania: Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology.

- Boutros-Ghali, Boutros (1994), "Foreword", in: Alexander, E. (ed.), *Voice of Indigenous Peoples*, New York, Clear Light Publishing.
- Campbell, Bruce (1996), *The Miombo in Transition: Woodlands and Welfare in Africa*, Bogor, Centre for International Forestry Research.
- Cobo, José Martinez (1982), "The Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations", for: United Nations Economic Council: Commission of Human Rights, vol. 5, paragraph 379; [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/MCS\\_v\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/MCS_v_en.pdf) (10.11.2011).
- Diamond, Jared (2004), *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, New York, Viking.
- DiCicco-Bloom Barbara & Crabtree, Benjamin (2006), "The Qualitative Research Interview", in: *Medical Education* 40 (4): 314-321.
- Galaty, John (1993), "Maasai Expansion and the New East African Pastoralism", in: Th. Spear (ed), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, pp. 61-87.
- Geertz, Clifford (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books.
- Geschiere, Peter & Nyamnjoh, Francis (2000), "Capitalism and Autochthony: The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging", in: *Public Culture* 12 (2): 423-453.
- Gleditsch, Nils Petter (1998), "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature", in: *Journal of Peace Research* 35 (3): 381-400.
- Goldstone, Jack (2002), "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict", in: *Columbia Journal of International Affairs* 56 (1): 245-263.

- Gupta, Akhil & Ferguson, James (1992), "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", in: *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 6-23.
- Gupta, Akhil & Ferguson, James (1997), "Discipline and Practise: 'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology", in: Gupta, A. (ed.) & Ferguson, J. (ed.), *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of Field Studies*, Berkeley – Los Angeles - London, University of California Press, pp. 1-47.
- Herskovits, Melville (1926), "The Cattle Complex in East Africa", in: *American Anthropologist* 28 (1): 230-272.
- Hitchcock, Robert (2002), "'We Are the First People': Land, Natural Resources and Identity in the Central Kalahari, Botswana", in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28 (4): 797-824.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. (2008), "Introduction: Comparative Perspectives on the Indigenous Rights Movement in Africa and the Americas", in: *American Anthropologist* 104 (4): 1037-1049.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. (2008), "Precarious Alliances: The Cultural Politics and Structural Predicaments of the Indigenous Rights Movement in Tanzania", in: *American Anthropologist* 104 (4): 1086-1097.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas (1994), "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflicts: Evidence from Cases", in: *International Security* 19 (1): 5-40.
- Jacobs, Alan (1965), "African Pastoralists: Some General Remarks", in: *Anthropological Quarterly* 38 (3): 144-154.
- Jolly, Pieter (1996), "Symbiotic Interaction between Black Farmers and South-Eastern San", in: *Current Anthropology* 37 (2): 277-305.

- Kaare, Bwire (1995), "Coping with State Pressure to Change: How the Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Tanzania Seek to Maintain their Cultural-Identity", in: *Nomadic Peoples* 36/37: 217-225.
- Kaare, Bwire (1996), *The Symbolic Construction of Community Identity of the Akie Hunter-Gatherers of Northern Tanzania*, London, University of London (PhD thesis).
- Kaare, Bwire (1999), "Saisee Tororeita: An Analysis of Complementarity in Akie Gender Ideology", in: Moore, H. (ed.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender and Fertility in East and Southern Africa*, London, Athlone Press, pP. 133-153
- Kaare, Bwire (2002), "Cosmology, Belonging and Construction of Community Identity: The Politics of Being Hunter-Gatherers among the Akie-Dorobo of Tanzania", in: *Senri Ethnological Studies* 60: 25-46.
- Kendrick, Justin & Lewis, Jerome (2004), "Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Politics of the Term 'Indigenous'", in: *Anthropology Today* 20 (2): 4-9.
- Kikwete, Jakaya (2005), *Speech by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete on Inaugurating the Fourth Phase Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania*, Dodoma, 30December 2005.
- King, John (1983), *Livestock Water Needs in Pastoral Africa in Relation to Climate and Forage*, ILCA (International Livestock Centre for Africa) Research Report No 7.
- Kratz, Corinne (1980), "Are the Okiek really Masai? Or Kipsigis? Or Kikuyu?", in: *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 20 (79): 355-368.
- Lee, Richard (1972), "!"Kung Spatial Organization: An Ecological and Historical Perspective", in: *Human Ecology* 1 (2): 125-147.
- Li, Tania (2000), "Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot", in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (1): 149-179.

- Kuper, Adam (2003), "Return of the Native", in: *Current Anthropology* 44 (3): 389-395.
- Maghimbi, Sam (2008), "Water, Nomadism and the Subsistence Ethic in Maasailand (Kiteto District)", in: Kimambo, I.N. *et al.* (ed.), *Contemporary Perspective on African on African Moral Economy*, Dar es Salaam, University Press Dar es Salaam (Chapter 5).
- Maguire, R.A.J. (1928), "Il-Torobo", in: *African Affairs* 28 (107): 249-268.
- Maguire, R.A.J. (1948), "Il-Torobo", in: *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 25: 1-25.
- Mercer, Claire (2005), "Reconceptualizing State-Society Relations in Tanzania: Are NGOs Making a Difference?", in: *Area* 31 (3) 247-258.
- Pallotti, Arrigo (2008), "Tanzania: Decentralizing Power or Spreading Poverty?", in: *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (116): 221-235.
- Schneider, Leander (2002), "Freedom and Unfreedom in Rural Development: Julius Nyerere, *Ujamaa Vijijini* and Villagization", in: *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38 (2): 344-392.
- Soekefeld, Martin (1999), "Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology", in: *Current Anthropology* 40 (4): 417-448.
- Sundet, Geir (1996), "The Politics of Land Tenure in Tanzania: The Modernizing State vs Smallholder Farmers", in: Schmied, D. (ed), *Changing Rural Structures in Tanzania*, Münster, Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, p. 62.
- Wiley, Liz Alden (2003), *Community-Based Land Tenure Management: Questions and Answers about Tanzania's New Village Land Act, 1999*, London, International Institute for Environment and Development, Issue Paper, No 120.
- Woodburn, James (1997), "Indigenous Discrimination: The Ideological Basis for Local Discrimination against Hunter-Gatherer Minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa", in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 (2): 345-361.

Zwanenberg, Roger van (1976), “Dorobo Hunting and Gathering: A Way of Life or a Mode of Production”, in: *African Economic History* 2: 12-21

**Articles from IWGIA (The International Workgroup for Indigenous Affairs):**

IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2000/2001*,  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/IW\\_2001.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/IW_2001.pdf) (26.06.2011)

IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2005*, pp. 463-474  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/IW\\_2005.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/IW_2005.pdf) (26.06.2011)

IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2009*,  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0212\\_I\\_09.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0212_I_09.pdf) (08.12.2011)

IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2010*,  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0001\\_I\\_\\_2010\\_EB.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0001_I__2010_EB.pdf)  
(31.11.2011)

IWGIA, *Yearbook: The Indigenous World 2011*,  
[http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia\\_files\\_publications\\_files/0454\\_THE\\_INDIGENOUS\\_ORLD-2011\\_cb.pdf](http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0454_THE_INDIGENOUS_ORLD-2011_cb.pdf) (08.12.2011)

**Information from the URT (United Republic of Tanzania) Website:**

URT: The Tanzania Development Vision 2025, <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/vision.htm>  
(29.06.2011)

URT: Land Visions, <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/lands.html> (22.11.2011)

URT: National Bureau of Statistics, 2002 Population and Housing Census,  
[http://www.nbs.go.tz/index.php?view=article&catid=57%3Acensuses&id=116%3A2002-population-and-housing-censuses&option=com\\_content&Itemid=82](http://www.nbs.go.tz/index.php?view=article&catid=57%3Acensuses&id=116%3A2002-population-and-housing-censuses&option=com_content&Itemid=82) (10.08.2011)

URT: Halmashauri Ya Wilaya Ya Kiteto (Government of Kiteto District): Maliasili (Natural Resources), <http://www.manyara.go.tz/kurasa/halmashauri/lga2/maji/index.php> (29.06.2011)

### **Information Various NGOs (Nongovernmental Organizations) Websites:**

ACHPR, *Indigenous Peoples in Africa: The Forgotten Peoples?*, 2006,  
<http://www.achpr.org/english/Special%20Mechanisms/Indegenous/ACHPR%20WGIP%20Report%20Summary%20version%20ENG.pdf> (14.11.2011)

CORDS, Home: Context and Background, <http://www.cordstz.org/index.html> (17.10.2011)

Dorobo Funds, <http://dorobofund.squarespace.com/> (24.06.2011)

KINNAPA, About Us, [http://nexustz.com/kinnapa/about\\_us.html](http://nexustz.com/kinnapa/about_us.html) (11.10.2011)

TANGO, About TANGO,  
[http://www.tango.or.tz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=35&Itemid=55](http://www.tango.or.tz/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=35&Itemid=55) (04.10.2011)

Tanzanian Private Sector Foundation, Region Information: Manyara,  
<http://www.tpsftz.org/mapinfo.php?region=21> (16.08.2011)

UNICEF, Special Paper: Children and Vulnerability in Tanzania, 2007, p. 9  
[www.repoa.or.tz/documents\\_storage/Special%20Paper%20%2007.25.pdf](http://www.repoa.or.tz/documents_storage/Special%20Paper%20%2007.25.pdf) (15.08.2011)

UNPFII (United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues), About Us/Mandate,  
[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/about\\_us.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/about_us.html) (10.11.2011)

**Rest Websites:**

BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/tribe/tribes/akie/index.shtml> (31.11.2011)

Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Okiek in Tanzania (alternate name Akie),  
[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=oki](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=oki) (01.07.2011)

The Free Dictionary, <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Masai+Steppe> (14.06.2011)